

# IN THESE TIMES

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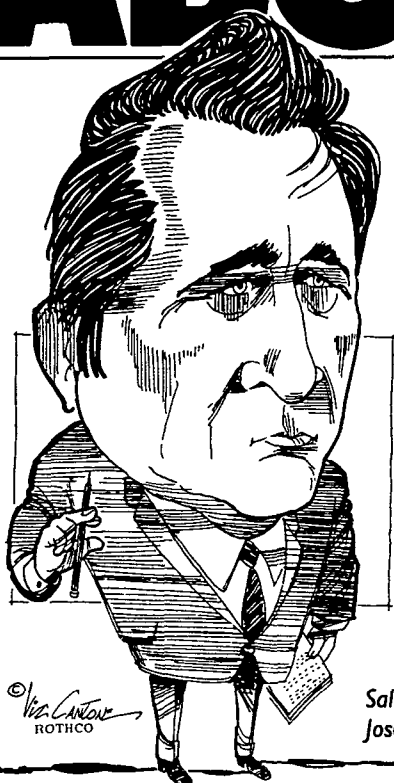
## The Political Dollar

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# INSIDE LABOR



Salvadoran President  
José Napoleon Duarte

## Labor report due on Central America

By David Moberg

Labor opposition to Reagan administration policies in Central America should be strengthened as a result of a report due later this month from a delegation of U.S. trade union officials who visited El Salvador and Nicaragua in February. The delegation is likely to say that workers' rights and security have improved little under the government of El Salvador President Napoleon Duarte. The report, to be issued by the National Labor Committee in Support of Democracy and Human Rights in El Salvador, will also probably criticize Sandinistas in Nicaragua for harassment of non-Sandinista unions but conclude that the U.S. and the labor movement should do nothing to support the *contra* anti-government guerrillas.

Although the final report has not been approved, Committee Secretary David Dyson of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU) said that the labor delegation concluded "Duarte has very little power. He is a centrist who can be trotted around Congress to keep the aid going, but the aid goes to the army." The group was especially shocked by comments of David Passage, deputy chief of the U.S. mission. Passage said the Reagan administration was not upset that the new coalition of right-wing parties was likely to win parliamentary elections this spring. "On the contrary, we're rather pleased with that development," Passage said, according to Dyson. Passage argued the far right majority would be a "good solid check on Duarte's reformist tendencies."

The delegation also met with Duarte himself. The group included Government Employees President Kenneth Blaylock, Woodworkers' President Keith Johnson, ACTWU Secretary-Treasurer Jack Sheinkman and Vice-President Ed Clark, New York city public employees leader Victor Gotbaum, UAW Regional Director Perry Johnson and UAW Shop Chairman Frank Hammer, brother of AFL-CIO aide Michael Hammer, who was killed by National Guard assassins in the San Salvador Sheraton Hotel coffee shop in 1981.

The U.S. labor leaders wanted to know why no action had been taken against the killers of Hammer, AFL-CIO aide Mark Pearlman and peasant union leader Rodolfo Viera, even though they had been clearly identified and two corporals even admitted pulling the triggers. Duarte said that a special committee had been formed, but the attorney general was a founder of the ultra-right party Arena and all nine Supreme Court justices were from the right-wing coalition. "He left us with no hope there would be anything done," Dyson said.

Although urban death squads have taken less of a toll recently, peasants in areas identified as sympathetic to the rebels have suffered terribly under new waves of bombing and air attacks with modern U.S.-supplied equipment, Dyson said. Out of desperation, not because of any liberalization by the Duarte regime, there has been an increase in union activity, especially in the public sector. But the week before the delegation arrived, two leaders of the transport workers who had been on strike were murdered.

In Nicaragua the delegation made a point of meeting with business, labor and church opposition groups. (Showing a striking lack of political sense, the one top Sandinista leader who agreed to meet with the group failed to make the appointment.) The opponents "told us rather substantial stories of Sandinista harassment," Dyson said—overnight arrests, offices broken into, pickets of offices. But none of the opponents supported or wanted the U.S. to support the *contras*, he said. They argued that the war made everything worse and that the solution lay in political negotiations. Some Sandinistas "admitted there had been some excesses," Dyson said, but claimed opponents were linked to the *contras*.

The unions outside the Sandinista movement have relatively weak support. Some are anti-government, others neutral. The U.S. delega-

tion was pleased that the right to strike, suspended on the grounds of war emergency, had been restored, but they were critical of the power the minister of labor had to modify union contracts. The final report is likely to call for loosening restrictions on unions and greater respect for anti-government unions but attack U.S. policies toward the country—and by implication some AFL-CIO actions.

In their travels through the country, Dyson said, the U.S. labor leaders were impressed with the lack of public support for the *contras* despite demoralization as a result of the shortages and other economic hardships. They were shocked with reports of *contra* terrorism—including murder of pregnant peasant women—and impressed with one high-level U.S. official's off-the-record view that Nicaragua was clearly not an eastern-European style society.

Officially the AFL-CIO edged back toward support of aid to El Salvador after Duarte's election and has come close to support for the *contras*. In unofficial practice, through actions of representatives of the American Institute for Free Labor Development and various hard-line conservatives on the staff, Reagan's policies have been given more support. The new report should give the hardliners some consternation.

## Teamsters consider new arguments

This week Teamster local officials meet to consider a tentative Master Freight Agreement that should eventually cover around 200,000 truckers. Going into negotiations some of the hottest issues with rank-and-file members apparently included pay increases and a restoration of cost-of-living (COLA) protection (after a wage freeze and diversion of COLA payments to benefits in the last contract), pension improvements (there has been one increase in the past 12 years) and job security.

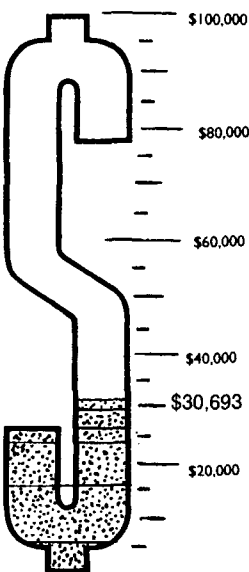
Despite theoretically protective language in the current contract, major trucking companies—many of which have remained quite profitable despite the tumult of deregulation and widespread bankruptcies in the industry—have diverted thousands of jobs to non-union drivers. At times they have set up separate non-union entities (called "double-breasting" after the common practice in construction trades) or sublet supposed "overflow" traffic to other leasing operations or individual owner-operators. Besides controlling such actions, militant trucker locals and Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) have argued for control on overtime, which provides no extra benefits or time-and-a-half compensation and is thus very attractive to trucking companies. They have also proposed some form of preferential hiring or a union hiring hall so that truckers from failing firms will have first crack at other jobs—and less incentive to make under-the-table concessions hoping to save a bankrupt company.

The most bitterly contested item is likely to be an employer plan for a two-tier wage system, with new employees receiving lower rates. In September 1983 truckers overwhelmingly rejected Teamster President Jackie Presser's attempt to change the contract in mid-term to make such a concession, the first rejection of a Master Freight Agreement contract in the union's history. According to early reports, Presser once again has agreed to such a plan. Apparently he hopes that a wage increase (deceptively inflated by a 33-cents-an-hour COLA increase due on April 1 when the contract expired) will divert attention from such otherwise unpalatable provisions.

TDU and some local union presidents will fight such concessions but it's an uphill battle. The Teamster constitution ambiguously requires a majority to ratify a contract but two-thirds vote to reject an employer's final offer. Even if a movement develops to reject the contract, Presser could do as he did during last year's contested United Parcel Service contract vote: announce that a strike would gain nothing more. With a leader committed in advance to winning nothing, many members may be resigned to take what they've been given.

"But there's a political price he would have to pay," argues TDU organizer Ken Paff. "We're future-oriented. We're not going to get a great rank-and-file contract [this year]. But more members and local presidents are convinced we have to have a change of direction." Heavy-handed pressure for an unpopular trucking contract will build opposition that someday could overthrow Presser, despite the constitutional protection against rank-and-file democracy in the Teamsters.

But Presser could go out another time-honored Teamster route. There are reports he may soon be indicted for defrauding his home local union by paying more than a quarter million dollars to "ghost employees." Some of the ghosts have already been convicted, and their checks were signed by Local 507 Secretary-Treasurer Presser. There is speculation that Presser's support for Reagan as well as his role as an FBI informant since the '70s has delayed indictments as the Justice Department seeks to find a way to avoid charging him. ■



### That sinking feeling

Seven weeks into our \$100,000 fund drive, we have received only \$30,693. This week only 38 contributions, totalling \$1,815 came in. This is bad news. Each week the amount received goes down, so it appears that we can expect to end up with about \$35,000 from this effort.

That means we will run short of money sometime in the next three months, and that we'll have to go back to the emergency appeal that we would like to avoid. If you are not among the 1,200 subscribers who have already helped with a contribution, please send us one now.

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## IN THESE TIMES

By David Corn

WASHINGTON

**I**N WHAT SEEMS TO HAVE BECOME A congressional ritual, the MX missile just managed to squeak by two close House votes last week. The votes in favor of releasing MX production funds that Congress suspended last year was indeed a victory for President Ronald Reagan, who pulled out all the stops in his lobbying efforts.

But like past votes, which have endorsed the intercontinental missile only narrowly, last week's votes do not represent the final win for MX proponents. Congress will have to confront the MX (which can carry 10 warheads) again in a few months, and the margin of this recent vote plus the nature of the debate surrounding it suggest that the MX controversy has not yet been settled.

After two days of often emotional debate, the House on March 26 approved by a vote of 219-213 the release of \$1.5 billion, originally a part of the fiscal year 1985 budget, for producing 21 MX missiles. Two days later, the House again backed the missiles 217 to 210. These votes, coupled with two earlier 55-45 votes in the Senate in favor of the weapon, lifted the freeze that Congress imposed on President Reagan's 1985 budget request for the missile.

While increasing the number of missiles that Congress has approved from 21 to 42, this vote did not provide funds for deploying those missiles. Later this year Congress will consider the administration's current \$4 billion MX request, which includes funds for producing another 48 missiles and funds for deploying the missiles in the 1985 request. To date, the administration has won enough deployment funds to cover only 10 missiles.

While the White House eagerly took credit for a hard-fought win, MX opponents, following the vote, maintained that the fight on Capitol Hill would continue. "This system will eventually be defeated," predicted Jay Hedlund, a lobbyist for Common Cause, which opposes the MX. He and other opponents argue that if a massive White House lobbying drive can only net such a close win, then there is evidence of a solid and stable MX opposition that is still positioned to end the program.

The House vote was a cliffhanger and followed intensive lobbying by both MX proponents and critics. While the House debated, administration lobbyists—one wearing a baseball cap emblazoned with "Peacekeeper Flight Team"—cornered members in the hallways of the Capitol. Letters and phone calls poured from the White House to members' offices. But the heavy ammunition was chief arms negotiator Max Kampelman—dubbed the "Max Factor"—who had flown to Washington from Geneva in order to meet with legislators on the Hill and at the White House. His mission: convince members that he needed the MX in order to negotiate in Geneva.

While debate on the MX continued on the House floor on March 25, Rep. Les Aspin (D-WI), the chair of the Armed Services Committee and an influential supporter of the MX, shuttled members to audiences with Kampelman. Later in the day, two army buses carried about 80 members to the White House for a meeting with President Reagan and Kampelman.

### Opponent push.

On the other side, MX opponents mounted perhaps their most extensive effort to date. During the days prior to the vote, anti-MX lobbyists from Common Cause, SANE, the Council for a Livable World and other arms control groups visited and called legislators, generated grassroots pressure on members and tried to maintain an accurate head count. In addition to working with the liberal representatives who usually spearheaded the MX opposition, anti-MX lobbyists forged a loose alliance with sev-



## Reagan gets his MX missiles

eral members of the House leadership, particularly Rep. Richard Gephardt (D-MO), chair of the House Democratic Caucus, and Rep. Thomas Foley (D-WA), the majority whip. Gephardt and anti-MX lobbyists, for instance, traded information on swing members. (Gephardt, according to several observers, played a vital role by working behind the scene, lobbying fellow

### BATTLE OF THE BUDGET

Democrats. And when members arrived at the Capitol on each day of the debate they were confronted by a gauntlet formed by anti-MX lobbyists lined outside the entrance to the chamber.

Nevertheless, President Reagan and Aspin, who has consistently been able to save the MX from defeat, got their way this round. The administration line, which Aspin embraced, relied predominantly on the bargaining chip argument—that is, if Congress withholds these 21 missiles, then the U.S. negotiating position at Geneva would be undermined. In the course of the debate, many pro-MX members spoke of the need to demonstrate "national resolve" in light of the current negotiations.

While this argument, backed by Kampelman's pleas, won the day for the White House, many members only went along grudgingly. "This is the most difficult vote I have faced in my 23 years in Congress," Rep. Frank Horton (R-NY) said on the House floor, in announcing his decision to support the MX. While he did not see a strong military justification for the weapon, he said, he simply could not deny Kampelman what the chief negotiator claimed was needed to insure successful negotiations. Earlier, MX opponents had considered Horton to be a swing member, though a long-shot.

During the House debate, most MX supporters echoed Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-CA), who maintained, "You can't separate the MX from Geneva."

MX detractors argued forcibly against the bargaining chip approach, noting that Reagan could come back again and use the same argument to obtain support for the next batch of MX missiles, "Star Wars" program, anti-satellite weapons and the rest of his military program.

"If you buy the bargaining chip today, be prepared to buy it again and again," Foley warned his colleagues. It is even debatable that the MX is a bargaining chip,

with administration officials offering conflicting accounts as to the negotiability of the system.

And Howard Berman (D-CA) observed that a bipartisan majority of the House would agree that there is no sound military reason for the missile. "If we could vote on the merits of the MX, there is no doubt it would be defeated," he announced.

But most MX proponents ignored any discussion of the system's technical merits. In addition to waving the Geneva flag, they held out the carrot of tens of thousands of jobs that MX production would provide. And appeals to patriotism ran rampant. One member called for the U.S. to "stand tall" and vote for the MX. Several referred to the U.S. military intelligence officer who was shot by a Soviet soldier in East Germany. And a dash of red-baiting was thrown in by Rep. Eldon Rudd (R-AZ), who claimed that the "Soviet propaganda machine has been successful in telling us we don't need the MX." To a chorus of hisses from the Democratic side of the chamber, Aspin chimed in that "to remove these missiles is to give some help to the Soviet Union."

What this latest battle demonstrated is just how difficult it is for Congress to say no to the president on a national security matter. It has never denied any president a strategic weapon system. Referring to the Senate vote, one Senate aide observed that most swing members did not have the backbone to stand up to the political pressure applied by the White House.

As did some House members, several senators expressed concern that if Congress killed the 21 MX missiles, Reagan would be able to blame Congress for any lack of progress at the negotiating table. Some Democrats in both chambers also noted their fear that the Democratic Party is seen as weak on defense and, thus, could not afford to be tagged as the party that killed the MX.

**While the White House eagerly took credit for a hard-fought win, MX opponents said the fight will continue.**

MX opponents, following the votes in both chambers, were quick to point to the significance of the fact that a large number of House and Senate members did stand firm in the face of the administration's full-court press. In the House, this included 24 Republicans, of which four were freshmen who were under enormous White House pressure to toe the line.

### Strong-arm tactics.

The administration's win did not come cost-free. Flying Kampelman in is not the type of lobbying move that it can repeat too often—if ever again. Such strong-arm tactics tend to cause some resentment on the Hill. The White House may be hard pressed to find new ammunition for the next round, and they may well need some if MX opponents can themselves keep the heat on regarding the fiscal year 1986 MX request.

Aspin, the crucial player in the MX fight, lost ground in the good-will department this time around—and that could become a factor in future votes. Several Democratic House members accused Aspin of betraying them and the Democratic Party by abandoning a promise he allegedly made. According to several Capitol Hill observers, some members maintain that Aspin offered to reconsider his support for the MX in return for members' endorsements of his bid to gain the helm of the Armed Services Committee. Aspin denies agreeing to such a *quid pro quo*.

But his actions have generated bitterness among some of his Democratic colleagues. At the end of the debate on March 26, Aspin won a standing ovation—from the Republican side of the floor. That may come back to haunt him, for the Democrats have tried, with limited success, to turn the MX into a party vote. But 61 Democrats did join 158 Republicans in the House on March 26 to support the system.

The bottom line is that the White House forced Congress to free the production funds, yet it was not able to achieve the true congressional mandate for the MX it seeks. Thus, when the 1986 request is taken up by Congress, the administration will have to be prepared for yet another MX fight. Already, Aspin has indicated that the maximum number of missiles Congress might approve is another 21—less than half of the president's request. And MX critics say they will again press for zero.

Whether both sides can maintain the high-powered lobbying efforts on this issue is uncertain. There is a sense that Congress is tiring of arguing about the MX every few months. But if both sides remain committed, the battle will drag on.



# INSHORT

Beth Maschinot

## AMA: Yes, MASA

The American Medical Association (AMA) showed few signs of discomfort last week as it announced that it had no intention of dropping out of the World Medical Association meeting that will be held in Cape Town, South Africa, later this year. In fact, in a press release issued in support of the site, the AMA said it commended the Medical Association of South Africa (MASA) because it represented medical professionals "regardless of race or color."

But the Medical Coalition Against Apartheid—representing the American Medical Students Association, the Black Physicians' Association, the Free South Africa Movement, Operation PUSH and others—had a different reading of MASA's complicity in the apartheid system. After a rally that drew 400 protesters to the AMA headquarters in Chicago, Cathy Christeller of the coalition called the AMA's decision "an outrage." She cited cases where white South African doctors have aided or covered up police brutality against blacks, the best-known example being the Steven Biko killing. In fact, in the aftermath of that killing, 12 countries—including Great Britain—dropped out of the WMA because doctors involved in the killing were not censured. Christeller also pointed out that doctors and nurses operate under the intricate rules of apartheid: black doctors aren't allowed to treat white patients unless a white doctor can't be found, black medical students often do not do autopsies as part of their training because they're forbidden to touch the white bodies supplied for the purpose. The coalition estimates that South Africa has one doctor for 330 whites and one doctor for 1,900 blacks.

Karen Prupes of the AMA refused to comment on the coalition's charges. She said she "didn't have the facts" and that the AMA would not comment until after the Cape Town meeting in October. The AMA, in its press statement, claimed that it did not want to establish any "political barriers" in the practice of medicine.

## The business of baseball

A Chicago circuit court judge took a swipe at major league baseball and its corporate owners last week by upholding state and city bans on night games at the Chicago Cubs' Wrigley Field. The Cubs will appeal the decision.

"The *game* of baseball may be 'everybody's business' but the *business* of baseball is greed," Judge Richard L. Curry said in a 64-page decision that used baseball terminology and the familiar words of "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" to chide the Cubs and the commissioner of baseball for losing "their grasp of reality and perspective on values...." The fight over lights at Wrigley Field has been raging since the Tribune Company bought the Cubs in 1981. The Tribune Company also owns Chicago's largest daily newspaper and a host of television and radio stations nationwide. The Cubs argued that light bans unfairly singled out Wrigley Field, the only stadium affected by the laws. They said the bans prevented them from conducting their business and that city and state governments did what should have been left to the court.

But neighbors of Wrigley Field argued that night games would destroy their community, and although the community has put up with the noise and inconveniences of daytime baseball games for 70 years, it would not tolerate it at night. Curry agreed, saying major league baseball was "trashing a residential community...so that television royalties might more easily flow into the coffers of 25 distant sports moguls...."

The Cubs also said Baseball Commissioner Peter Uebberoth challenged the lights bans, warning the Cubs of "drastic consequences," should the team make it to the World Series. Curry, however, noted "...it is the commissioner who fails to demonstrate any game-related justification (other than money) for the threatened punishment."

## INFACT, again

INFACT, the group that pressured Nestle into cleaning up its profitable but often deadly traffic of infant formula in underdeveloped countries, has turned its gaze to profit-making transnationals that work closer to home. Soon after INFACT announced the success of its seven-year Nestle boycott in January 1984, organizers kicked

**Gossypol** is a word to remember. A derivative of the cottonseed plant, it's thought to be the leading contender for a male birth control pill. Clinical tests in China—where cottonseed oil has long been known as a sperm inhibitor—show that gossypol is 99.89 percent effective, with few side effects. But U.S. researchers predict that it will be at least 10 years before gossypol or some other male birth control pill is marketed in the U.S., due to strict FDA regulations on contraceptives and a reluctance on the part of drug companies to invest in the research.

**A** federal court judge has ruled that two books from elementary school libraries that mock and disrespect African-American slaves are unconstitutional. The books, which parents can first review and then if they're suitable for their kids. It seems the board disapproved of the title of *Albert Herbert's (Harriet, the Black Girl, the Boy in the World and Albert Herbert's*

*Hawkins and the Space Rocket* because they "exemplified a lack of respect for authority" and "portrayed wrongdoing as fun."

**The FBI plans** to hire 1,300 special agents over the next two years, says the Federal Jobs Digest. That will make 1985 and 1986 record years for new additions to the bureau.

**The Vietnam war** ended 10 years ago this month. Remembering the impact that mass mobilizations had on legislators in those years, people from across the country will be pouring into Washington April 19-21. The event, called the U.S. government's involvement with South Africa and the U.S. role in Central America. Besides a rally on April 20, there will be educational and cultural events (April 19), training sessions for lobbying and civil disobedience (April 21) and then congressional lobbying and civil dis-

obedience at selected sites on April 22. For more information, call the War Resisters League at (212) 228-1450.

**Oh, those civilized British:** One of the many burgeoning far-right student groups in Britain, the University Right, has ties with the South African embassy and touts the slogan "Apartheid, O.K., Apartheid, U.K." Their glossy new magazine, *The Liberator*, received warm wishes and a letter of encouragement from Margaret Thatcher. *The Liberator* has tough competition, though: another right-wing student group publishes a magazine that is criticized by many student unions for its racism and sexism. *The Campus* is calculated to outrage. One recent strategy to defeat the left found in its pages included "experimental spraying of socialist demos with special sterilizing liquid" and "deportation of any trouble-making Rastafarians to sunny Ethiopia."

off a long-term campaign against the production of nuclear weapons by U.S. transnationals. Each month, two more corporations are inducted into the "Weaponmakers Hall of Shame" as INFACT volunteers take to the streets to educate Americans about some of the country's best-known corporations and their little known role in weapons production. In addition to facts and figures on the corporations' pet weapons and big profits, the "Hall of Shame" sheets list helpful information on personnel sharing between the corporations and the Pentagon and contributions to military minded political action committees. INFACT also has handy cards ready to send to the CEO of each corporation, demanding that the bosses begin to think of other ways to channel their labor and resources. So far 65,000 cards have been directed to eight different companies.

One of April's inductees is Honeywell, the 21st largest defense contractor with \$1.1 billion in contracts for weapons and military information systems, and TRW, which ranks 19th and spends more than \$1 billion a year in high-tech defense, including chemical lasers and electronic warfare. Other honorees include Rockwell International, Martin Marietta, AVCO, GTE Sylvania, General Tire and Rubber, General Electric, Boeing, Westinghouse, Morton Thiokol, Northrop and Hercules.

INFACT plans to zero in on one of the defense contractors this summer to increase pressure with adverse publicity and perhaps begin a boycott. For more information on INFACT's campaign, call or write INFACT, 434 S. Wabash, Room 702, Chicago, IL 60605.

## Judge for the defense

Judge Martin Boyle of the 52nd District Court in Michigan acquitted two trespassers at the Williams International weapons plant last week, leaving the prosecutor crying "miscarriage of justice" and anti-nuclear protesters jubilant over the first successful use

of the "necessity defense." In the past two years, more than 90 protesters at Walled Lake plant have been arrested and have, all together, served more than five years of jail time.

Tom Lumpkin and Marietta Jaeger entered Williams' property last December 28 to mark the gateposts with blood on the Christian Feast of the Holy Innocents. Williams makes F107 engines for cruise missiles and is currently designing super-sonic engines to give the cruise first-strike capability. Lumpkin and Jaeger claimed that they had exhausted all means of legal protest against the arms race, and Boyle concurred. Boyle also found that the second, and more difficult, criterion of the necessity defense—that the action taken would be effective in curtailing the threat—was fulfilled. Though some may see the protesters action as "weak," Boyle said, he pointed out that they did it in the hopes that someday others would join them. Citing the feeling of futility with a Congress that continually votes for more weapons systems, Boyle said, "If people believe this is what it takes, who can blame them?"

Boyle also didn't mince any words when asked if the trespassers interfered with Williams' right to do business. He said that Williams can always appeal to the military for help and added that "maybe the price of nuclear weapons is turning the military against the people."

Prosecutor Brooks Patterson moved for Boyle's removal from the trial before it began, citing the judge's membership in Lawyers for Nuclear Arms Control as evidence of his bias. Boyle was unperturbed, however. "I don't believe I'm partial. I am informed on the subject. Because I understand the issue, I'm supposed to sit off the case. Who would be better to hear it—someone who's ignorant about it?" Boyle—and two other judges on the same bench who were also challenged—was found fit by a higher court. Patterson is now threatening to bring the judge before the Judicial Tenure Commission.

This weeks contributors: Meg Dennison, Jeanie Wylie.



**F**OR THE U.S. DOLLAR, THE WEEK that began March 18 was not an easy one. The currency that spent the '70s crawling on its belly had stabilized in late 1980 and risen strongly ever since. In the first two months of 1985, its growth curve shot steeply upward. The almighty buck pierced the 10-franc barrier in mid-February and appeared headed on its way toward parity with the British pound.

But then in late February it wavered, and in mid-March, on news of the Ohio banking crisis, it plunged. By Tuesday, March 19, the dollar had fallen more than 4 percent against the French franc and the West German mark over the previous Friday and 7 percent against the British pound. It regained a bit on Wednesday, but then on news that the U.S. economy was beginning to stall, it fell back Thursday another 2 percent against the mark and 3.5 percent against the pound.

On the international currency exchanges, the talk suddenly turned to whether the dollar had turned a decisive corner. But the significance of a dollar decline would extend far beyond the marketplace. The currency that plummeted during Watergate, turned mildly upward during the Ford administration and fell again in response to Jimmy Carter's weakness and vacillation had evolved into a highly sensitive political barometer.

It had taken heart from Reagan's election victory in 1980. It gained sustenance from his \$100-billion tax cut in 1980, his invasion of Grenada in 1983, and his mining of the Nicaraguan harbors in 1984. Reagan was the most conservative American president since Herbert Hoover, and the international money men who steered millions of pounds, francs and *deutschmarks* into U.S. government securities were clearly appreciative. The White House took the dollar's newfound strength as an international vote of confidence.

If so, the dollar's fall would signal that Reagan is losing support in this most important of international constituencies. The consequences of a loss of political confidence, which is what a plunge in the dollar would mean, could be sweeping not only for the U.S. budget deficit, but for the "Star Wars" anti-missile program, the ability of NATO to hold together and a host of other military-political questions.

#### The crucial connection.

The trap for the dollar was laid two weeks earlier when E.S.M. Government Securities, a high-flying brokerage house in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., closed its doors after the Securities and Exchange Commission accused it of a \$315-million fraud. Nearly half that sum was owed to a Ohio savings and loan, the Home State Bank of Cincinnati, whose owner, Marvin Warner, former U.S. ambassador to Switzerland under Jimmy Carter, was linked to E.S.M. through ties of family, friendship and personal self-interest.

The result was a shot in the arm for the much-maligned domino theory. E.S.M.'s collapse triggered the collapse of Home State, which in turn wiped out Ohio's unusual state insurance program covering 71 of the state's savings and loans. As word spread that the thrifts were in trouble, depositors began demanding their money. The lines outside many of the thrifts grew progressively longer until March 13 and 14 when depositors began showing up with lawn chairs and folding cots, preparing to spend the night so they could have first shot at the withdrawal window the next morning. On Friday, March 15, Gov. Richard Celeste ordered the thrifts closed. It was the first bank holiday declared in the U.S. since 1933.

Actually, the amount of money involved was quite small. Assets of the 71 savings and loans totalled only about \$5 billion, small change compared to the \$40 billion in assets held by the Continental Illinois of Chicago when it collapsed last May. But the run on Continental Illinois, the nation's seventh largest bank, had been a members-

only affair, limited to large-scale institutional investors who deal in certificates of deposit denominated in six figures or more. When word got out that Continental Illinois was badly over-extended, money began to flee. But it was electronic money, mere blips on the VDT, which was transferred to safer institutions with only a few taps on the computer keyboard.

The Ohio bank run, on the other hand, was more old-fashioned. It didn't involve sophisticated, professional investors but ordinary working people. It didn't originate in financial capitals like Tokyo and Paris but in small towns in the American heartland. It wasn't ethereal and electronic, but vivid and flesh-and-blood. It was, in fact, exactly like the panics of the Great Depression that bankers knew only from history books or movies like Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*. It was the real thing.

The international impact was dramatic. British newspapers gave the Ohio S&L story bigger play than the American press. "The dollar's as weak as Ohio," joked *The Economist* in London. Compounding the dollar's troubles was the U.S. Department of Commerce's release of its "flash estimate" of economic growth for the first two and a half months of 1985 showing a scant 2.1 percent increase. Even worse was the release of an inflation gauge known as the implicit price deflator that showed prices

**The official U.S. policy is to hope for a "soft landing" in the form of a slow and gentle settling of the dollar, without a concomitant rise in interest rates or inflation.**

*Lehrer Report* to discuss various ways that the panic could get out of hand and set off a financial explosion.

Both men were long-standing critics of Reaganomics. But this time they were able to go beyond abstract criticisms and point to actual fault lines that had opened up in the financial markets.

With the 1981-82 recession hit, bringing

## ECONOMY

# Has the dollar turned a decisive corner?



A bank customer attempts to get someone's attention at the Independent Savings, one of 70 privately insured savings and loan offices ordered closed in Ohio on March 16 by Gov. Richard Celeste.

rising at a surprisingly rapid 5.4 percent annual rate.

Taken alone, any of these three phenomena could be dismissed as misleading, inconclusive or insignificant. Taken together, they tended to confirm that the Reagan economic recovery that began in late 1982 was at last running out of steam. The economic slowdown, the whiff of inflation and the evidence of underlying financial instability all hinted that the bubble had begun to deflate.

The sudden unpopularity of the dollar prompted Leonard Silk, the *New York Times* economics columnist, to speculate on the "substantial likelihood that the economy may be disrupted this year," as one economic consultant put it. Felix Rohatyn, general partner of the Lazard Freres investment banking house, went on the *McNeil-*

with it the first double-digit unemployment of the post-war period, leftists were quick to blame the president. To be fair, though, it wasn't entirely the Great Communicator's fault. The basis for the decline was laid two years earlier when Jimmy Carter named Paul Volcker to head the Federal Reserve. Volcker's monetarist leanings were well known and his instructions were implicit. His task was to impose discipline on a system that had grown dangerously lax throughout the '70s.

In the eyes of bankers the world over, a crackdown was overdue. Inflation was moving into the high teens, the dollar was fading and the Iranian revolution was giving OPEC the excuse it was looking for the second major oil price hike of the decade.

The monetary indiscipline was accompanied by a moral and political indiscipline

IN THESE TIMES APRIL 3-9, 1985 5 as well. Volcker's reappointment coincided with Carter's descent from the Camp David mountaintop in which he lectured the nation eerily on the subject of "spiritual malaise." Environmentalists were predicting (quite incorrectly, it turned out) that the globe was about to run out of oil, topsoil, breathable air, potable water and even *lebensraum* due to overpopulation. Medieval theocracy (including pre-capitalist bans on usury) had emerged triumphant in Iran. Americans felt lost, bewildered, weak, impoverished.

But then came Volcker like a stern Dutch uncle to rouse them from their depression. He tightened up on credit and sent interest rates soaring. In combination with the second world oil shock, in which oil prices more than tripled, the effect was stunning. The prime hit 21 percent and by early 1980 the world was in recession. It recovered late in the year—too late to permit Carter's re-election—but collapsed again in mid-1981.

The second downturn was the worst since the '30s. The industrial Midwest was laid waste, with Depression-level unemployment in places like Michigan and Ohio. Commodity prices crashed, weakening OPEC and crippling emerging Third World industrial powers such as Mexico and Brazil.

In August 1982, Mexico announced that it was unable to keep up on payments on its \$80-billion foreign debt. Brazil, with \$90 billion in foreign debt, followed suit in December. Suddenly, a powerful wave of credit crises swept across Latin America, Africa and portions of Asia. It was not unlike the crisis that had rolled across Europe and America a half-century earlier when the Credit Anstalt bank collapsed in Vienna in 1931 and the Bank of England came close to defaulting a few months later.

In hindsight, Reagan deserves some of the credit for rescuing capitalism as we know it from the brink. The panic was still rising in late 1982, but by November it had

become apparent that the Reagan tax cut of 18 months earlier was beginning to work its magic. By January, the signs of recovery were unmistakable. Confidence was restored, the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) patchwork of Third World debt accords held and the nation's gathering demand for low-cost foreign imports soon had manufacturers the world over hoping.

The chairman of the Federal Reserve cooperated with Reagan to the extent of loosening credit controls somewhat in mid-1982. But he refused to loosen them as much as the president's more extreme/supply-side economic advisers would have wished. The consequence was a basic mismatch in economic policies that has often been compared to driving with one foot on the gas pedal and the other on the brake.

*Continued on next page*



Continued from preceding page

On one hand, Volcker was determined that the government not spend beyond its means. On the other hand, the Reagan administration maintained that spending beyond its means, at least in the short term, was the only way out of the mess created by a half-century of liberal Keynesian economics.

The strength of the Reagan recovery was certainly impressive. The economy grew 12 percent in 24 months, unemployment dropped from 10.7 percent to 7.0 percent and inflation fell to 4 percent or less. But borrowing costs remained high, with real interest rates (the nominal rate minus the rate of inflation to determine the true cost of borrowing) hovering around 7 percent, two or three times the rate of the '50s.

Supply-side economists were more than willing to admit that cutting taxes would throw the federal budget into deficit. But they expected economic growth to accelerate to the point that more tax revenues would be generated than ever before. Thus the budget gap would quickly be bridged. When that didn't happen, they blamed Paul Volcker, who, for lack of supply-side faith, was smothering their revolution by refusing to let up on interest rates. Supply-side economics, the purists said, had died a-borning.

Curiously, many left-wing Keynesians also joined in the anti-Volcker chorus. They ridiculed the uproar over the \$200-billion federal deficit as a bit of right-wing economic atavism and, by comparing the stagflation of the '70s to the Depression of the '30s, argued that deficit spending still remained the sole prescription for lifting the country out of its slump. A place for Volcker was cleared in the Keynesian-left hall of horrors. He became the evil pin-striped, Eastern-establishment banker incarnate, who bled Latin American peons with one hand and the noble American yeomanry with the other.

The comparison between the '30s and

the '70s is misleading, however. 1929-33 was a period of wholesale debt liquidation, in which banks were stripped bare, stockbrokers left penniless and ordinary people deprived of their jobs. The '70s, by contrast, was a period of wholesale debt accumulation. American farmers and consumers, Third World businessmen and governments all borrowed to the hilt. The Volcker deflation of the early '80s threatened to bring that structure crashing down. But then Reagan cut taxes in 1981 and the Federal Reserve relaxed a bit in 1982 and a collapse was avoided. Indeed, the mountainous debt grew larger and larger, fed this time by the U.S. Treasury's immense borrowings to finance the federal budget deficit.

As Paul Sweezy and Harry Magdoff noted in December's *Monthly Review*: "Popular control of the Fed is...advocated by some radicals as a panacea—one that could presumably create jobs, revive sick industries and generally guard against economic calamities. What is astonishing about this widespread delusion is its persistence in view of the historical record.

Indeed, the problem is not the Federal Reserve but the long-term cycle of boom and bust that, as Magdoff and Sweezy noted, is "inherent in profit-directed societies." Meanwhile, unusually perceptive bourgeois economists began wondering whether wholesale debt liquidation—"creative destruction" is how they described it—was not the only long-term solution to the slowdown that had been gathering force since the '60s.

#### Rise of the imperial dollar.

A half-decade ago, with the dollar mired in its lowest depths, an American in Paris was a pitiable sight. He could be seen carefully counting his centimes before entering a cafe, choosing from only the cheapest items on the menu and glancing worriedly through his wallet before ordering dessert. With the dollar worth only 4.4 francs, he was poor and therefore unpopular with shopkeepers and restaurateurs. On the other

hand, Arabs were immensely popular with the retailing classes—at least Saudi and Kuwaiti oil sheiks, as opposed to the Algerian immigrants, who were paid next to nothing to sweep the streets and subways. The petro-sheiks, though, tipped lavishly and spent with abandon, and if not loved, were at least respected.

These days, though, it is the Arabs who are feeling the pinch after three or four years of world oil glut, while the Yanks have returned to their big, expansive, "ugly American" ways of the '50s. Americans in Paris now gobble down meals at three-star restaurants and remark that they are hardly more expensive than the Steak-and-Brew back home. Switzerland strikes them as cheap, Italy as dirt cheap, Britain as verging on Third World. When the dollar broke the 10-franc barrier, some young American expatriates got the idea of renting a barge on the Seine, hoisting a large American flag and dollar sign and inviting "a lot of French people" to celebrate their currency's triumph.

"For a night, we will just generally act as if we owned Europe," one of the new dollar-imperialists told an editor of the *Wall Street Journal*. "We'll let them know that until they do things our way, their economies will be mired in recession."

By forcing the Reagan administration to borrow \$200 billion a year rather than merely printing money to cover the deficit, Volcker set the dollar on its upward course. The U.S. proved immensely popular as a borrower and financiers who had gotten burned in Latin America and Africa were only too happy to invest in the world's stablest and most powerful capitalist economy. Yet at some point the realization set in that the American economy was not inexhaustible and the dollar's rise not irresistible. The sheer explosiveness of the dollar's rise suggested that its fall might be violent as well.

Reagan apologists such as the libertarian-inclined Alan Greenspan, chairman of the president's Council of Economic Advisers, suggested that European traders had over-

reacted to the long lines of anguished depositors at the Ohio savings and loans. But the banking crisis was not the only cause for alarm. By February, U.S. industrial was .8 percent below the peak last August. Capacity utilization had dropped to 80.7 percent. Unemployment had risen to 7.4 percent. Service-sector employment was still growing, but the jobs hemorrhage was continuing in manufacturing.

Thus, the gap between production and consumption was clearly widening. The run-up in the value of the dollar had priced American goods out of the foreign markets. The U.S. was still flooded with money, but it was money borrowed from abroad and, increasingly, spent on goods that were manufactured abroad. The U.S. was a good place for lawyers, accountants, hairdressers and other service-oriented jobs that are shielded from foreign competition, but cold and inhospitable for farmers and steel workers. As *Business Week* noted worriedly last month, it was even becoming unfriendly toward computer engineers and other members of the high-tech avant-garde, who were also suffering the sting of cheap imports, primarily from East Asia.

#### Where is the dollar heading?

A falling dollar places the Federal Reserve in a cruel dilemma. If it falls far enough, inflation will inevitably resume for the simple reason that if the dollar is depleted, more of them will be needed to purchase any given good. And whatever the temporizing of the Federal Reserve, inflation probably remains its chief fear.

It is also the chief fear of foreign investors who, at the first sign that the Fed has relented on the anti-inflation fight, will likely dump their dollars on the assumption that further devaluation would be in order. In such a case, the Fed would have little choice but to raise interest rates to stabilize the dollar and demonstrate its anti-inflationary resolve. Higher interest rates, however, could tip the country into recession, worsening the budget deficit and further dampening confidence in the U.S. economy.

In other words, the U.S. Treasury has gotten itself high up on a perch from which it doesn't know how to get down. Official policy is to hope for a "soft landing" in the form of a slow and gentle settling of the dollar without a concomitant rise in interest rates or inflation. That would make American goods more competitive abroad, chip away at the \$123-billion U.S. trade deficit and put a halt to the rout of American manufacturing.

But the best laid plans of economists invariably go astray. The Reagan administration is unwilling to cut its huge military budget or otherwise take the harsh measures it has urged on countries like Brazil, Mexico and Israel to bring its finances into line. Congress is similarly paralyzed.

Hence, the outlook is for mounting unease. The dollar's problems last month suggest it will not land softly but with a bump.

Daniel Lazare writes frequently for *In These Times* from New York.

IN THESE TIMES' EUROPEAN CORRESPONDENT DIANA JOHNSTONE'S NEW BOOK...

## THE POLITICS OF EUROMISSILES



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## Unrest in Belgium

American nuclear cruise missiles were already en route to the U.S. Air Force base at Florennes in southern Belgium when the empire's faithful servants in the Belgian provinces, headed by Prime Minister Wilfried Martens, pretended to "decide" to allow the missiles to be deployed. The first 16 of Belgium's quota of 48 cruise missiles arrived in Florennes the evening of March 15, only some three hours after Martens announced the long procrastinated "decision" to the Belgian parliament.

Belgian citizens interviewed in the street



A March 17 demonstration in Brussels against the cruise missiles brought out upward of 150,000 people.

## Impertinence in Spain

On February 13 the U.S. government quickly confirmed leaks that the Pentagon did have contingency plans to employ nuclear depth-charges on the territory of several allied countries, including Spain, without consulting their governments. The government of Socialist Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez felt this sort of disclosure was not a bit helpful in enabling them to get wary Spaniards to approve NATO membership in the referendum Gonzalez has promised to hold early next year.

But it may well be that Ronald Reagan's imperial court is not so much interested in helping Gonzalez win the referendum as in dissuading him from holding it. Such a referendum could set a bad precedent for behavior in all the lesser provinces. Also, to win it, Gonzalez seems to be considering limiting Spanish integration into the unified NATO military command, as well as possibly cutting back U.S. base rights, and such eccentricities do not fit into the global plans of the Empire.

Although nuclear weapons were banned from Spain under the 1975 U.S. base rights agreement, the confirmed February 13 report said 32 nuclear depth-charges would be stored in Spain for use in hunting submarines or blocking the straits of Gibraltar. The next day, however, Deputy Premier Alfonso Guerra said his government was

said the unpopular decision proved that Belgian policy was made in Washington. Still, Belgian cabinet ministers scurried around in the final days trying to give the impression they had something to do with it.

The prize stunt was performed by Foreign Minister Leo Tindemans. In Moscow for Soviet Premier Constantine Chernenko's funeral, Tindemans made what the Belgian government described as a "last attempt" to delay cruise missile deployment by asking Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko to do Belgium a favor in return. The favor was nothing less than for Moscow to abandon its whole arms control negotiation policy at Geneva by agreeing to the separation of the three areas of Euromissiles (intermediate range nuclear forces), strategic missiles and "Star Wars"

unaware of plans to place nuclear weapons in Spain and would never give consent.

More surprisingly, the Spanish government let it be known that two U.S. spies were being expelled from Spain. Back on January 28, two Americans, Dennis MacMahan and Johnny Massey—unofficially identified as a CIA agent and an electronic espionage specialist from the U.S. base at Torrejon—were caught in the act spying out the secret communication system of the prime minister's official residence, Moncloa palace.

Observers assure that this sort of friendly curiosity is perfectly normal between the U.S. and its allies. As is well known, the Pentagon loves to think up scenarios and be ready for all of them. Some day it might come in handy for the U.S. to isolate the Spanish prime minister by cutting his communications.

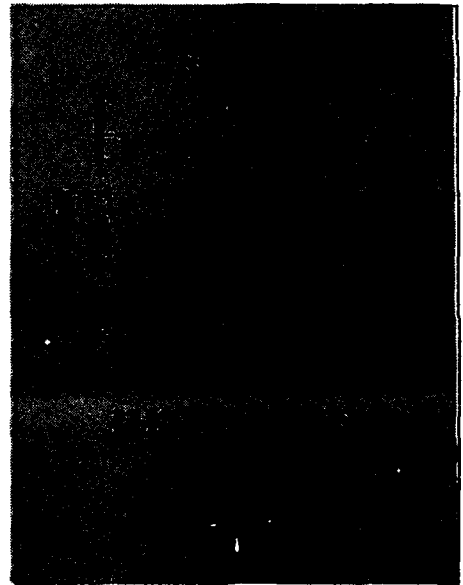
Even the conservative opposition leader Manuel Fraga had to approve the expulsions, although he added that between friendly countries, expulsions occur but are not usually mentioned. Washington responded by saying that relations with Spain were wonderful but cast a veil of vagueness around the dates of President Reagan's visit to Madrid in May.

Some observers believe that the Reagan administration wants to lay down the law to the uppity Spaniards before the May visit. The U.S. wants Spain to accept NATO membership, including integration and nuclear weapons, and it would like Gonzalez to heave out his foreign minister, Fernando Moran, who has an annoying

weapons as the Reagan administration would like.

Alas, Tindemans did not get a positive "signal" from Gromyko. This enabled the ruling Christian Democrats to conclude that there was no early prospect for a Euromissile accord, ergo the missiles should be installed to encourage the negotiations.

Catholic opposition to cruise missile deployment is so strong in the Flemish half of the country that the Flemish Christian People's Party (CVP) risks losing its longstanding hold on the government in Brussels. Polls show the Flemish Socialist Party running ahead of the CVP in Flanders for the first time in history. Thus the party of Martens and Tindemans faces possible defeat in the elections to be held in December.



habit of expressing his own rather than Washington's thoughts.

For instance, in early March Moran reminded *Le Monde* that Spain does not feel much gratitude to the Atlantic alliance. "We weren't liberated from fascism by their troops. We did not benefit from the Marshall Plan. Quite the contrary: the 1953 military agreement between the U.S. and Spain played a decisive role in consolidating Franco's power, by breaking his international isolation."

And in a document just released by the Council on Foreign Relations, Moran warned that massive U.S. intervention in El Salvador or Nicaragua would have a powerful impact on Spanish public opinion and could jeopardize Spain's continued participation in NATO.

ness regulation. However, the American admitted being "impatient" at the slowness of the desired changes.

He then assured the Germans that, although Americans are putting their money in Asia (higher profits, cheaper labor, weaker unions—more "dynamism," in a word), "our heart" remains in Europe.

What are ordinary Germans to get out of the imperial policies being foisted on them, other than shorter holidays, fewer social benefits and a greater chance of being jobless and broke? Burns had a ready answer for that: patriotism and even reunification.

"Patriotism," Burns lectured the Germans, "is a natural, constructive impulse that gives hope for the future." And Burns has clear ideas about Germany's future: "I wish for reunification with all my heart," he said, inasmuch as the "German soul" is suffering from the country's division. Moreover, he had a "sure intuition" that reunification would come some day. How? Certainly not through neutralization. The

But fidelity to the Empire won out over mere electoral concerns. Observers were hard put to figure out precisely what threats or enticements produced such fidelity, other than U.S. permission for the Antwerp-based branch of Bell telephone to go ahead with its big sale to China. CVP members of parliament were whipped into line to approve the *fait accompli* in a vote of confidence March 19. The CVP group leader Luc Van den Brande, who wanted to vote against the missiles, was told in no uncertain terms that such defiance would be the end of his political career. The chamber shook with laughter when CVP President Frank Swaelen solemnly announced that each CVP member would vote according to his conscience.

In the main speech of the day, Louis Tobback pounded home the Flemish Socialists' opposition to missile deployment. With electoral victory in the air, Tobback pledged that the Flemish Socialist Party "will not take part in a government that leaves the missiles there." What has been done by one government can be undone by another.

Or can it? The Flemish Socialists, however victorious, will have to govern in coalition with other parties, including their French-speaking counterparts from Wallonia, who are less interested in the missile issue. Alain Van der Biest of the Walloon Parti Socialist (PS) blasted the ruling Christian Democrats for "behaving toward our allies more like vassals than like equal partners." But if his turn came? Another spokesman for the PS, Philippe Moureaux, ruled out any "unilateral dismantling of cruise missiles."

The real show was a magnificent demonstration held in Brussels on March 17, just two days after the cruise arrived in Florennes. Organizers had hoped, with a relatively short mobilization period, to bring out 50,000. But upward of 150,000 people turned up, representing all of Flanders from the looks of it.

Flemish Socialists, Flemish nationalists, Flemish ecologists were all there in force, but so were Flemish Catholics, including 300 singing nuns. Many demonstrators carried home-made signs asking what had become of democracy when the government could so flagrantly disregard the will of the people on a major issue.

The large number of Catholics in the demonstration was considered most politically significant. Very much in evidence was the Catholic labor umbrella organization ACW, which is an important component of the CVP constituency. Opposition to the cruise deployment seems likely to spur the ACW groups who want to break away from the CVP and form a Catholic Workers Party.

Leaders of the influential Belgian peace movements announced plans to lead an electoral campaign to defeat those members of parliament who voted in favor of cruise deployment. Although many Belgians are skeptical of the ability of any Belgian government to stand up to American dictates, it would give them satisfaction to vote Martens, Tindemans and company out of office.

## Retiring U.S. Proconsul Arthur Burns tells West Germans to be patriotic

Retiring U.S. Proconsul Arthur F. Burns gave the West Germans some parting instructions on what policies and even attitudes they should adopt in a final chat with journalists in the U.S. embassy in Bonn at the end of his four-year tour of duty. Burns said that although he had learned to love Germany, he could not point to it as a model because "Americans work harder."

Germans have long vacations, lots of holidays, get time off for rest and convalescence and have one of the shortest work weeks in the world, the American ambassador complained. This was undermining the work ethic and making the economy insufficiently "dynamic," the 81-year-old retiring ambassador said.

Burns told the Germans plainly what was wrong with them: strong labor unions, high taxes paying for too many social benefits and business profits that aren't high enough. Profits, he stressed, are the most important indicator of the health of an economy because they attract investments. German trade unions are much stronger than those in the U.S., Burns emphasized, pointing to dire consequences for German technological development. In all the many new high technology centers in the U.S., he said, not a single research outfit is unionized.

But Burns saw reasons for optimism about the future of the Empire's German province: the Kohl government's plans to cut back taxes, the welfare state and busi-

great majority of Germans want to remain in NATO, he reminded the journalists. The big unanswered question then is: how is East Germany to be absorbed into NATO?

Burns' successor in Bonn will be 38-year-old Richard Burt, who has been in charge of Euromissile policy in the State Department and has been one of the leading promoters of cruise missile technology. His appointment makes it clear that what matters about Germany to the Reagan administration is its role in arms production (and consumption). German industry is being promised a piece of the action in Star Wars research and development. As Proconsul Burt should help foster the growth of a military-industrial complex in West Germany strong enough to help beat back the demands of organized labor and other advocates of peaceful development with promises of high-tech supremacy, appeals to patriotism and even the prospect of German reunification.



By Joan Walsh

SAN FRANCISCO

**T**HE TIMING COULD NOT HAVE been worse. With the start of 1985, more than a year of political bloodletting seemed finally over at the besieged environmental group Friends of the Earth (FOE). Interim management could at last devote full attention to the organization's continuing fiscal woes.

But at the end of January an attorney reviewing the group's books discovered a curious, unbudgeted disbursement of almost \$30,000, a significant sum in the usually tight cash flow of even healthy nonprofits, let alone the deeply in debt FOE.

A paper chase solved the mystery, but opened yet another round of the infighting that has thrust the group into national headlines since last summer. The money had gone to pay secret severance awards to two former FOE officials, Executive Director Jeff Knight and interim Chief Executive Officer Bob Chlopak, who had been edged out of the organization after participating in efforts to oust FOE founder and board Chairman David Brower.

Only three board members had agreed to the severance awards. Rafe Pomerance, FOE president until last July, had authorized Knight's before his departure. Brower, who became interim chief executive officer at 1984's end, knew about neither. The final flourish: Knight and Chlopak had signed their own checks, four days after their official tenure with FOE, Inc., ended December 31. (Both would stay on as consultants to FOE Foundation for two months.)

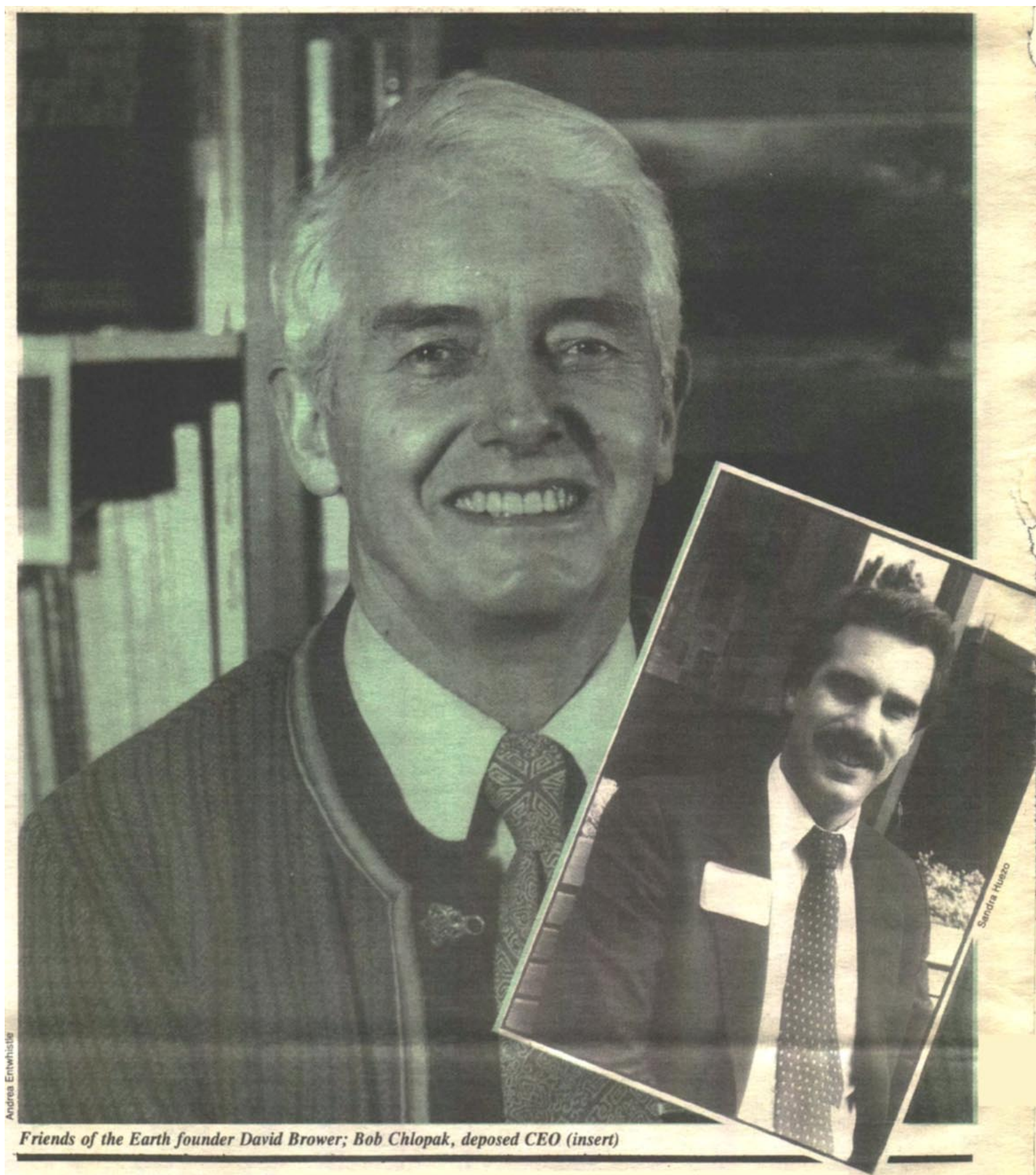
Environmental movement gossip has dubbed the awards "golden parachutes," a hyperbolic term by the corporate standards it connotes. Knight received a total of \$17,359.26, representing five months' salary, accrued vacation and health benefits; Chlopak got \$11,666.66, for two-and-a-half months' salary, vacation and benefits. But by FOE standards the sums were significant. The total represented more than the staff union's proposed wage package for 1985. It equaled half the surplus FOE had accumulated this fiscal year, and could have paid at least two of the 12 employees laid off in last year's fiscal crisis.

On the FOE board the old battle lines were again redrawn. When the board met in early February, retroactively ratifying the severance awards, members argued against raising questions about their legality, their secrecy, their timing, their size. But motions to retrieve the payments and submit the severance question to the full board failed, as did an attempt to halt the meeting and get independent legal advice about the existing agreements. By a seven-to-five vote, the directors approved the awards and at that point the two board factions agreed on one thing: the matter should be dropped, and FOE should get on with its work.

But that hasn't quite happened, at least not yet. Despite attempts at secrecy, word about the Knight-Chlopak awards has spread. With it spreads concern about a lawsuit by members challenging the fiscal responsibility of the agreements, given FOE's large organizational debt.

Negative publicity could be almost as damaging as a lawsuit. The severance represented roughly 1,000 FOE members' annual dues, and the heavily pro-Brower membership isn't likely to be pleased by the board's largesse to the 72-year-old founder's rivals. Documents about the agreements are circulating. Two weeks ago *In These Times* received a xeroxed copy of attorney Mark Horling's February 8 memo to the FOE board raising questions about the severance agreements' legality. The memo came with an anonymous cover letter criticizing the decision and questioning its motives.

The controversy is likely to be officially reshaped one last time at the FOE Foundation board's April 1 meeting. Chlopak and Knight refused to comment on the circumstances of their severance deals. "I can do an able job of disputing anything people say about what I got and why I got it,"



Friends of the Earth founder David Brower; Bob Chlopak, deposed CEO (insert)

## ENVIRONMENTALISTS

# At a crossroads, Friends of the Earth confront difficult choices

Chlopak says. "But part of the agreement was that this would be the end of the issue, that it would not be debated in public."

But in many ways the severance awards—their size, their secrecy and the internal debate they generated—crystallize the issues that have divided FOE in recent years, a split that has been widening since Brower resigned official leadership of the group in 1979. There's a difficult equilibrium every public interest group must find—a balance between professionalism and dedicated activism, between Washington, D.C., lobbying and litigation and grassroots action, between establishment credibility and political integrity and, perhaps most important, ambitions, visionary goals and a stable organizational structure. In recent years FOE has battled to achieve that balance, and conflict has often pushed each side to extremes.

### The archdruid.

David Brower founded FOE in 1969, after a 17-year tenure as Sierra Club director. His departure there foreshadowed the conflict that almost forced him out of FOE—he left after placing newspaper ads opposing a Grand Canyon reservoir that lost the Sierra Club its tax-exempt status. Writer John McPhee immortalized Brower and his wilderness crusades in his 1972 book, *En-*

*counter with the Archdruid.*

Since its founding FOE has held influence in the environmental movement out of proportion with its membership, rating in the same breath as the Sierra Club, National Audubon Society, Wilderness Society and other powerful groups, although its roster has never climbed much above 30,000. FOE's place, it was widely agreed, was on the movement's "cutting edge," raising new issues and trying to move them into the environmental mainstream. Its early attention to acid rain, alternative energy policy and the environmental implications of nuclear war has helped bring those issues onto many groups' agendas nationally.

Publicly and internally, Brower made FOE run. His reputation and track record attracted media and membership, as well as a cadre of staff "drawn to his philosophic commitment and vision," notes David Phillips, FOE's wildlife coordinator and staff representative on the board.

As Brower tells it, many came to the organization as volunteers to work on personal projects. Eventually grants were found to pay them and they became part of the staff. "We start them cheap," he recalls. Field offices sprang up much the same way. FOE was always decentralized, a ramshackle structure held together by its found-

der.

When Brower stepped down from formal leadership on FOE's 10th anniversary in 1979, the organization lost its center. Board member Edwin Matthews, active in FOE International, moved from Paris to take over the reins. But he was splitting his duties between FOE and the newly established San Francisco branch of his law firm, Coudert Brothers, and the transition required full-time leadership. After a year, FOE legislative director Rafe Pomerance became president and chief executive officer. Instead of moving to San Francisco, Pomerance stayed in Washington, D.C.—a decision that would establish the basis for the Washington vs. grassroots conflict that came to divide the organization.

Reagan's election that same year provided both opportunity and hardship for the organization. Like all environmental groups, FOE had then-Secretary of the Interior James Watt to thank for a membership boost—it grew by 50 percent. But it couldn't capitalize on Watt the way wealthier groups like the Sierra Club did—the Club doubled its budget in four years to \$20 million. And the Reagan election had its costs, especially to FOE's International Project for Soft Energy Paths (IPSEP), headed by Jim Harding and Amory Lovins. IPSEP had managed to get occasional fund-



ings from the now-defunct Solar Energy office of Jimmy Carter's Department of Energy. Now government funding was unthinkable.

The publishing division faltered in this period as well, at least partly because of Brower's over-optimistic sales projections. A growing operating debt—FOE had always run at a small one—forced staff and program cuts over several years. But it wasn't until early 1984 that a massive proposal of staff cuts and field office closings became public, which intensified the labor/management, San Francisco/Washington, Brower/Pomerance tensions already apparent.

Pomerance denies that a political agenda shaped his budget-cutting proposals last year. "That's fictitious—the issue was financial. If we hadn't made the cuts we'd be out of business now. The staff-to-member ratio we were running at was larger than other groups and it could not continue; it was fiscally irresponsible. People turned it into a question of 'Who cares more about the environment?' but it was really just a question of fiscal solvency."

But Pomerance's proposals came at a time when staff/management relations were already uneasy, because of his attempts to impose a more centralized structure on the traditionally autonomous staff, and because of his distance in Washington. Even before the formal budget-cutting proposals someone had found a management "hit list" accidentally left in the San Francisco office copying room. Titled "The Harding Indictment," it was a collection of arguments for firing IPSEP director Jim Harding, followed by a list of other people management wanted to axe. The list caused a furor at FOE, poisoning relationships further.

As management came to blame the unwieldy staff for the deficit, the staff blamed management. In Pomerance's first three years, FOE, INC., revenue grew 70 percent, Knight says. But FOE lost money in 1983, partly because of the publishing division, partly because, as Knight acknowledges, some big investments didn't pay off. Money was invested in new fundraising staff, large direct-mail experiments and several special events, hoping for a big return. "Some broke even, but some didn't quite pay for themselves, and we saw we couldn't blue-sky it anymore," Knight says.

### Vision proposals.

Management at least tried to involve the staff in plans to restructure FOE and cut costs, Chlopak notes, soliciting "vision proposals" from around the organization. But it didn't produce any workable solution to FOE's dilemmas, he says. "It wasn't possible. It's hard for people to be altruistic or visionary about the future of an organization they may not be a part of anymore—jobs were in question."

Chlopak's own vision proposal became an issue in itself. He and PAC staffer Liz Raisbeck proposed merging FOE with Environmental Action, the Washington-based lobbying group, cutting its California staff to "at least two," and becoming a smaller, more centralized organization. Chlopak would later dismiss his proposal's impact as a "red herring," but it served to validate the Washington-phobia that had gripped the San Francisco and field office staff.

Historically, relations between Washington and San Francisco have often been strained. In the early '70s a rebellion by Washington FOE staff led to the founding of the Environmental Policy Center. Yet Brower notes that FOE was the earliest environmental group in electoral politics, spinning off the now independent League of Conservation Voters in the early '70s.

Chlopak likes to stress the compatibility between electoral work and grassroots campaigns. In New Hampshire, for instance, FOE sponsored an acid rain conference just before the presidential primary, drawing 600 people and six presidential candidates. In North Carolina, FOE's work on behalf of Democratic Senate candidate Gov. James Hunt focused on toxic waste issues.

Yet the organization's Washington focus was intensified by last year's election, in

which FOEPAC spent \$150,000 deploying 26 staffers in congressional candidates' races around the country. But not all of the candidates FOE endorsed were star environmentalists. FOE's early Walter Mondale endorsement, pushed by Pomerance and Chlopak, alienated many staff. Veteran New York FOE staffer Lorna Salzman's repeated public denunciations of FOE's Mondale backing got her fired in May, just before the other staff cuts were formally proposed. Her dismissal only confirmed staff suspicion that a political agenda was shaping management's budget proposals.

For the San Francisco staff, the only response seemed forming a union. "We knew we couldn't stop all layoffs, but we felt people needed some protection, a process," says Angela Gennino, a former editor of FOE's newspaper, *Not Man Apart*, who became a leader in the union drive. Management, backed by FOE members, fought the union with unexpected tenacity, but finally recognized District 65 of the UAW on the eve of a National Labor Relations Board hearing.

But while the union was preparing to negotiate the terms of the budget cuts, Brower and others were simultaneously trying to prevent them, arguing for emergency fundraising and pay cuts to keep the staff intact. In June the board voted the proposed staff cuts over Brower's strident opposition, but authorized him to chair a summer fundraising effort.

The board would later charge that the effort was not meant to raise funds to prevent the staff cuts, but to close the continuing deficit. Brower denies that, and the conflict peaked when Brower personally paid for a \$350 full-page ad in *Not Man Apart* publicizing the organization's debt crisis and appealing for member contributions to "Save the Team." The ad was inserted secretly, and when FOE management saw it in print they seized all 30,000 copies of the paper (taking pains to tell the press the papers would be recycled). A hastily called board meeting, attended personally by eight of 27 board members and five by conference call, debated Brower's alleged insubordination and threw him off the board.

But Brower got himself reinstated, by a combination of media work and legal threats. Charging that FOE bylaws didn't authorize conference call votes, Brower sued FOE. The board reversed itself, but the squabble didn't end there. Anti-Brower board members tried to change the bylaws to make conference call votes legal; pro-Brower board members threatened to call a members meeting to change the bylaws and vote a new board of directors.

Given the members' loyalty to Brower, that was a potent threat: it exacted a board agreement to restructure the board, cutting it from 27 to 15, and provided for membership elections of directors. The board also agreed to search outside the organization to hire a new chief executive officer by December 31. If none could be found by that date, Chlopak's tenure would end and Brower would take over in the interim. Chlopak and Knight decided to leave, effective December 31, and it seemed the archdruid had won again.

### An unruly beast.

Brower's approach had its own flaws. Under his leadership FOE was a patchwork of projects, its departments, field offices and branches like fiefdoms, each protected by its relationship with Brower. Probably no new management could have been expected to hold together that diversity.

When Pomerance took over and tried to pull the reins in, rebellion was inevitable. "There was a lot of autonomy, people running their own show," acknowledges *Not Man Apart* editor Tom Turner, a former executive director. "It was fair that new managers would try to get a hold on such an unruly beast."

Others agree that FOE never evolved a workable structure to succeed Brower. "There had always been great trust that people making decisions shared values, and Brower's views held sway," notes Charlie Drucker, a former energy division staffer. "When he left, it was unclear where new values were to come from."

Gennino, a staunch critic of the Pomerance-Knight-Chlopak management style, nonetheless believes Brower's approach may have been proven "outdated. I'm not sure you can have individuals deciding on their own what the organization should back and what their projects should be. There has to be a new assessment of how environmental organizations can be run best in the '80s."

The labor-management problems that flared also had roots in Brower's tenure, since the organization has never established formal hiring, firing or compensation policies and had traditionally paid the staff subsistence wages, almost as a matter of principle—environmentalists work for love, not money. But all over the non-profit sector management is learning that love doesn't go as far as it used to and employees need wages that can pay doctor bills, support families, even buy cars and homes.

In the structural vacuum, fiscal crisis inevitably tore the organization apart, since the management and board allies at least had a dollars-and-cents answer for dealing with it. Their approach may have reduced FOE's departments to "profit and loss centers," in Drucker's words, but the Brower response suffered from failing to acknowledge the deficit's seriousness and propose long-term projects to deal with it.

Brower defends his approach. "We've never been in the black, and the question is, should the deficit change things, or act as a warning flag?" he says. "There were two philosophies. You can either solve your financial difficulties with cuts, or you can hang on to your team and try to make your programs more exciting. I saw the Sierra Club grow from 7,000 to 77,000 between 1952 and 1969, and we didn't have direct mail. We had a program that attracted members."

But the Pomerance-Knight model, in balancing the organization's political goals with fiscal solvency, tilted too far toward the bottom line. Perhaps hardened by "grass-roots" resistance, they advanced a "professional" alternative, adopting traditional methods of management and becoming increasingly contemptuous of the iconoclastic activism that had motored FOE since its founding.

The trend is not unique to FOE. A December *Los Angeles Times* piece found the entire environmental movement at a crossroads, with FOE, the Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, Audubon Society and others all searching for new directors. The article noted that job descriptions for the groups' top spots looked more appropriate to a private corporation than an environmental group. It sparked debate among environmentalists, and provoked a *Times* editorial asking if "the Harvard or Stanford MBA will replace the climbing boot and ice-ax as the leadership symbol of the nation's major environmental organizations?" The editorial warned against sacrificing idealism for expertise—invoking for inspiration none other than David Brower.

FOE veteran David Phillips thinks FOE has to return to its "activist" roots. "That's why members have joined us, because they can say, 'I'm supporting a bunch of people working on the subsistence level to save this planet,'" he says. "Lately people have been complaining, 'You're not out there in front of the bulldozers.'" Some then join more militant environmental groups like Earth First!, he says.

Chlopak remains an unabashed "professionalist." "We don't want to take on the

**A divided leadership has led to infighting and bitterness in the organization. Will the MBA replace the ice-ax?**

worst characteristics of the opposition, but we have to realize that some sound business practices are essential. Look at the Sierra Club, at the Wilderness Society, at other groups that don't run large operating deficits. We need people who can manage large budgets, raise large sums of money—it's not enough to be a star environmentalist."

But FOE board member Herb Gunther, Public Media Center director, believes over-professionalism is a real threat to FOE, and he blamed excessive focus on Washington. "In the environmental movement, a lot of lobbyists deal with corporate types and policymakers all the time, and they soon begin to talk like them. A conflict develops between them and the old staff, which at FOE did dedicated work for low salaries on the same issues for 15 years. And when lobbying becomes the dominant activity and Congress becomes your focus, you don't care about having a decentralized branch structure. You don't care about open-pit mining in Utah, because it's not sexy. You want to focus on national big-bang policy, and to have FOE working on native American tribal sovereignty or tropical rain forests seems silly."

### "Corporate behavior."

Against this backdrop, the Knight-Chlopak severance hardens everyone's line on the professionalism debate. The pair had always argued for placing more emphasis on management and administration, and that meant paying salaries that would draw top-notch professionals. Legal questions aside, their severance deals seemed a final gesture of contempt for the staff that had fought that model.

"It's typical corporate behavior," says Gennino. "And these agreements were made at the very time they were going after the union. Jeff Knight would tell us he couldn't afford to give us more than one-and-a-half months' severance, then he took our language and typed up his own severance demands."

None of the three board members who authorized the agreements—Dan Luten, Alan Gussow and Robert Galen—could be reached for comment.

But Pomerance defends the agreements without apparent qualms. "Severance is a common thing. It's awarded to people who worked long and hard for an organization. David Brower got a pension." The agreements' secrecy also makes sense to him. "That's how these agreements are made—salary policies are confidential and management and staff don't have to agree."

New FOE Executive Director Karl Wendelowski wouldn't directly comment on the severance awards, made and ratified by the board before his tenure officially began. "I've kept myself at arm's length. It's my obligation to prevent a recurrence, and to help everyone patch their wounds."

Wendelowski, like most people involved with FOE, preferred to talk about the future. The fiscal picture is comparatively brighter, with the debt down from \$700,000 to approximately \$400,000. Wendelowski sees his task as developing a management structure for FOE, to make it more than a collection of "independent operating entities under an umbrella." Priorities have always been set by individuals, and there needs to be a sense of organizational priorities.

This year FOE will continue its arms control work, especially a push for nuclear non-proliferation treaty. It will expand its efforts to protect the nation's wild and scenic river system. And it will combine public education with political lobbying to encourage public and private sector support for sustainable, non-nuclear energy development in the Third World.

After all the publicized infighting, Wendelowski notes, FOE maintains "a sturdy, reliable membership base" of about 22,000. Ballots for the first board of directors election last month.

"We have new leadership, and we can redirect our energies," Wendelowski says. "I don't think what's gone on will be that important in six months. People are saying we have a vital organization here, so let's get on with it."



# LETTERS

*In These Times* is an independent newspaper committed to democratic pluralism and to helping build a popular movement for socialism in the United States. Our pages are open to a wide range of views on the left, both socialist and non-socialist. Except for editorial statements appearing on the editorial page, opinions expressed in columns and in feature or news stories are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the editors. We welcome comments and opinion pieces from our readers.

## Intimidated?

I HAVE BEFORE ME THE LATEST FOUR ISSUES of *In These Times*, covering the period from February 13 through March 19.

During this time Israel has begun its presumptive withdrawal from Lebanon, in its course continuing the barbaric practices initiated by its harebrained invasion of Lebanon on June 6, 1982.

Even though the normal press and liberal publications like the *Nation* have noted and commented extensively upon these most recent events, there has not been a word of analysis or criticism in the pages of *ITT* during this period.

One oblique reference in the "In Short" column dealing solely with Rabin's reference to the French members of the UNIFIL forces as "the worst bastards" was not so much a criticism of the official Israeli arrogance as a criticism of the hypocrisy of the French response to the outburst.

*ITT* has long had a history of ambiguity on the Israeli question. It is difficult not to conclude that *ITT*, like the U.S. Congress, has been intimidated by the Jewish lobby. For failure to speak out loudly *ITT* bears its share of responsibility for the deaths of tens of thousands of Lebanese and a similar number of wounded.

At the same time, *ITT*, in failing to consistently condemn Israel's reactionary foreign and domestic policy, shares in the deaths of Israeli soldiers, weakens Israel and contributes to a resurgence of anti-Semitism.

In the process, U.S. support of its client state Israel, exemplified by the recent vetoing of a resolution introduced in the UN Security Council condemning Israel's actions in Lebanon, has once again shaken the country's credibility, especially in the Mideast.

No amount of graphics, academic or

otherwise inconsequential essays on modern literature, TV or rock music can compensate for the lack of a clear and progressive political line. *ITT* is rapidly becoming a less and less interesting paper and certainly less and less a socialist one.

Chalmers K. Stewart  
Oyster Bay, N.Y.

## Religion and Politics

I READ YOUR NEWSPAPER WITH INTEREST and appreciate the information it gives me. In the last several months I have learned much about the injustice taking place in El Salvador and Nicaragua that I never would have learned if I hadn't read *In These Times*.

One of the articles I best remember was about the division in the Catholic Church over Central American policy and the activist priests. I would like to read more about religion and politics. Many people (including myself at times) are confused about morality, religion, spirituality and politics today. Hearing the facts on the real dangers of our world today and the real faith that people are putting to use to fight these dangers has been an encouragement to my faith.

I feel it is very important for people to see and hear about the connection. Then maybe their lives also will become an example.

Rachel Matteson  
Oxford, Iowa

## Pick and Choose

THANKS FOR INFORMATIVE REPORTING, great features ("In Short," "Sylvia," book reviews, music reviews, etc.) and, best of all, papers on time without a hassle.

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STQ1

What I do mind are their never-ending appeals that begin, "We are faced with an emergency...." I know times are tough for all of us, but I can't help everybody, and I hate the guilt trips. How would they feel if every time my rent was late again and my paycheck days away, I would write to them with an "emergency appeal"? They'd say, "Sorry, sweetheart, should have called us ahead of time."

That's why I'm glad you did just that. You called me before the emergency by writing in the paper and explaining why you needed the money. That made lots of sense. I wish I had enough money to give to every good organization, but I do not. So I have the horrible task of picking and choosing. Thanks for the rational, logical and thoughtful request. Thanks, too, for a great paper. Too bad I can't give more.

Diane E. Bailey  
San Francisco

## Too Poor

O.K., I GIVE UP! I FRANKLY CAN'T TAKE it anymore—putting up, that is, with the bourgeois media. Some time ago, when I could still buy *In These Times* on the newsstand, I thought that I was too poor to subscribe. Now I know that I'm too poor *not* to!

Kyle Robert Crocker  
Baton Rouge, La.

## Amtrak

I WANT TO THANK GREG LEROY FOR HIS article (*ITT*, March 20) on the attempts of right-wing ideologues in the Reagan administration to destroy Amtrak and thus inevitably all inter-city passenger rail service in the U.S. The National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP), of which I am a member, is currently leafleting trains and railroad stations all over the country.

The leaflets tell Amtrak passengers that all train service in the U.S. will end October 1 if the Reagan budget proposal is adopted and suggest that they write their senators and representatives and ask for an adequate level of funding. A similar leafleting campaign in 1981 produced an enormous amount of pro-train mail to Congress and thwarted an attempt by the current administration to confine Amtrak to the Northwest corridor.

*In These Times* readers who wish to help this effort should write or call: Na-

tional Association of Railroad Passengers, 417 New Jersey Ave., SE, Washington, DC 20003; (202) 546-1550.

Nick Norris  
Chicago

## Compensation

REPEATEDLY, PUBLIC OPINION POLLS show that 70 percent of the U.S. public opposes administration policy in Nicaragua. Yet this policy continues unchanged, even if Congress withholds funding for it. What can we do to make the actions of our government conform to the wishes of the people?

One action we have taken is to make a symbolic gesture of reparation for the economic suffering our government has imposed on this extremely poor and small but sovereign nation of three million people—damage estimated at nearly \$1.1 billion by Nicaragua's president. That amount works out to about \$14 for every tax-paying return to be filed with the IRS this year.

We have notified the IRS that we are withholding \$20 of a current tax bill and are sending it instead to the Embassy of Nicaragua, 1627 New Hampshire Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20009, with a letter to Ambassador Carlos Tunnermann explaining our action.

We chose this sum so that if the 70 percent of the population that opposes U.S. policy were to do the same as we, Nicaragua would at least be compensated for its economic losses. Obviously, even this action would be no compensation for the thousands of Nicaraguan lives already lost to U.S.-backed *contras*, who kill, rape and terrorize Nicaraguans who are working to better themselves and their country.

We hope that other Americans will feel moved to take similar actions during this tax period. Copies of our letters are available by sending us an SSAE at Box 1380, Ojai, CA 93023.

Lamar & Sally Hoover  
Ojai, Calif.

**Editor's note:** Please try to keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we may have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you want to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letters—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.

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## PERSPECTIVES



Mikhail S. Gorbachev, the new general secretary of the USSR Communist Party

## An open letter to the new Soviet leader

By Alex Amerisov

**A** NEW ERA OF SOCIALISM can be declared open with your becoming the new General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

The Soviet people are overjoyed with your ascent as the new leader of our country. Great hopes are pinned on you. Your age and intellectual brilliance makes people believe in the real possibility of some "fundamental changes," which you know we desperately need. At the same time, the wrath of people is going to be great if their hopes go unanswered.

If we see that nothing of relevance is being changed, the Soviet system will be subjected to a most ruthless attack. Your age, which is one of the most important reasons for high hope, will then become the very factor to cause social frustration. It is painful to wait for 15 or 20 years, and vest all one's hopes on another change in the country's leadership. No, it is impossible. You are the very best that the Soviet political system has produced in the post-World War II period. Hope runs high and those who destroy this hope by letting it go unsatisfied should beware.

What is the essence of this hope? What do Soviet people want more than anything else? Soviet people want one thing—Soviet Democracy. They want to take charge of their own lives, to be able to determine themselves the nature of problems and their solutions. They want democratic freedoms of unrestricted speech, association and travel. They want never again to hide a book, or a thought, or a friendship. The Soviet people want to breathe freely in a real socialist democracy.

In practice this means direct control of the means of production by those who employ those means, restricted only by broader social requirements as defined politically by the entire nation. It means that the Soviets (councils of representatives) should have real legislative and executive powers, with the party itself being restricted in the beginning to working out only the most general problems, and eventually none at all. It means real free-

dom of speech and abolition of censorship. It means total access to information about our own society in order to be able to govern ourselves rationally. It means the real and absolute right of any Soviet citizen (18 and older) to run for and be elected to a public office. It means that the role of the Communist Party should increase only in the sense that it will concern itself more and more with very general and common social problems, and eventually turn over responsibility for governing to the Supreme Soviet of USSR and disappear as a ruling institution. Meanwhile, it means drastic cuts in material privileges that party members and its officials enjoy due to having positions of leadership in our society.

Just as badly as we need democracy, we need justice. Today, there is an entire class of people in our country who do no productive work, but nonetheless eat very well. What was the Revolution for if not to abolish such parasitic existence. At the same time we have millions of people who do not receive deserved compensation. Conditions have developed under which millions of engineers cannot find a job corresponding to their training and abilities. This is unforgivable. Such a situation should never have been allowed to happen. Millions of

*In modern society, political freedom is an absolute condition of economic and technical progress. The waste of Soviet resources on political security causes stagnation.*

other young people do not get a chance fully to develop themselves because colleges accept the well-connected, rather than the most capable. The crackdown on corruption that was started under Andropov must continue. However, we have always had periodic cracks of the whip. Its effects have never been longlasting. What we need is a transformation of the social system to make corruption impossible.

Our economy is in a mess. It's in a mess because the principle, "from each according to his/her ability to each according to his/her work," is not observed. Jobs and positions, rather than work, get rewarded. There should be a great connection between one's contribution to society and one's compensation from society. "Equal pay for comparable work" should be a fundamental principle of economic reforms.

Soviet society faces three most urgent problems: agriculture, consumer goods production and high technology and communication systems. The solution to these problems is vital for the continued development of our country. Our ability to compete in the world's markets is now highly undeveloped. Our proportion of global GNP has not changed in the last 10 years. Billions are wasted in the repugnant Afghanistan intervention. Thousands of lives are lost. We should pull out of there immediately.

### Agriculture.

While industry, on the whole, performed fairly well last year, agricultural output has stagnated, dragging down overall indicators by 25 percent. The last six years were particularly bad for Soviet agriculture. Prices for produce rose sharply during this period. Expenditures for food take as much as 70 percent of the majority of Soviet families' cash income, with many retirees spending as much as 80 or 90 percent of their pensions.

Judging from your writings in the last couple of years, you have a program for dealing with problems in agriculture. Bringing parity to collective farming, i.e., making it as profitable as any other industry, is the first step. This approach will increase farmers' interest in greater food production, while allowing them to generate funds internally, and thus to have a greater say about the use of such capital. Building more roads, schools and entertainment centers in the countryside will keep more people there and help reduce labor shortages on the farm. Making life easier and better for farm workers is an important step in eliminating the substantial differences between the urban and rural life.

Your emphasis on a complex, rather than one-sided approach to solving agricultural problems also has great merit. Further encouragement of private small farming—in close relationship with large and fully mechanized state and collective farms—is another step in the right direction, as is your insistence on a scientific approach in agriculture.

### Consumer goods.

Consumer goods were always a subject of complaint. Quality is bad, quantity never corresponds with actual demand. It is either too little or too late.

Speculation, black marketeering, corruption and theft—these things are the result of a grossly inefficient way in which we produce and distribute these items. Here again, like agriculture, "fundamental changes" are needed. But the most important problem in consumer goods production is not lack of parity or proper incentives, but lack of competition. To solve this problem, a variety of things must be done all leading to increased competition on the basis of price and quality, even if opening the borders to foreign goods is needed to get it going. Workers must be given full control of their factories, with regulation of the markets vested in local and regional councils.

Growth of productivity is a modern society

cannot be imagined without massive introduction of the newest technology, especially in the office. Without rapid office automation, the entire society will stagnate. This means the introduction of copying equipment, computers and telecommunications systems on the widest scale.

In societies that require total censorship of a written word to "keep order," such vital technology comes into a direct conflict with social organization. Inevitably, social organization will have to be changed. Every computer and copier is a little printing press that can produce thousands of copies of *samizdat* (self-published) literature—something presently not allowed. The police now register all typewriters and copiers. With the coming technological changes, it will lose its ability effectively to monitor dissident writers.

In today's society, political freedom is an absolute condition of economic and technological progress. The waste of human, monetary and time resources in Soviet society for "safekeeping" of such technology is pathetic. Small companies cannot afford copying equipment because they do not have enough money to pay someone to stand around watching that nothing "unauthorized" is reproduced. When this person goes to lunch, the entire company must stop until he or she returns.

Billions are wasted to keep people from thinking and writing freely. Billions are lost because current restriction on the ownership and operation of copying and computer technologies is "politically necessary."

The Soviet Union has the most educated population in the world. It is well-versed in natural sciences and mathematics. We could be the leaders in production and the use of the most modern technologies. The only reason we are not is the total incompatibility of the present political structure

*Continued on following page*

## TROPICAL TOURS

### NICARAGUAN SOCIO-POLITICAL PROGRAM

May 5-19  
Bluefield's Carnival  
June 16-26  
Environmental Tour  
June 26-July 10  
Tico-Nica Tour  
(6 nights in Costa Rica, 8 nights in Nicaragua)  
July 14-28  
Revolutionary Anniversary  
August 4-20\*  
Lands of Sandino and Zapata  
(4 nights in Mexico, 12 in Nicaragua)  
August 18-28  
Agricultural Cooperatives tour

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August 11-13  
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As the travel agency for the National Network in Solidarity with the Nicaraguan People, Tropical Tours makes all travel arrangements for groups and individuals.

\*Mexico City departure. All other tours depart from Miami.

### For details contact TROPICAL TOURS

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# PERSPECTIVES

By Joanne Ruby & Jackie Gelb

**W**ITH SPECULATION IN the press on the meaning of the joint Arab negotiating formula recently reached by PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat and Jordan's King Hussein, 150 American peace activists from 25 states gathered in rural New Jersey February 15 to discuss changing American policy toward the Middle East. Recognizing the peace movement's need for information regarding the most volatile region in the world today, the American Friends Service Committee and Mobilization for Survival, helped by New Jewish Agenda and the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, organized the four-day conference, "Breaking the Silence." It succeeded for the first time in bringing together people from the nuclear freeze and disarmament movements and from church, black, Arab and Jewish communities. And it marked a growing trend of cooperation between two groups that have traditionally not worked with one another. American military involvement in the 1982 war in Lebanon provided the introduction by making clear the danger that the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict might escalate into a superpower confrontation potentially triggering a nuclear war.

The conference focused on this deadly connection between superpower intervention and the potential of nuclear war. Background information centered around three themes. First, the staggering quantities of sophisticated and powerful weaponry supplied by the U.S., the USSR and western Europe to Middle Eastern nations make the region ripe for conventional and nuclear conflict. Second, every president since Harry S. Truman has adopted a policy to use any means necessary, including nuclear weapons, to maintain the U.S. sphere of influence. A review of the history of American nuclear threats indicates that regional conflicts and American interventions in the Middle East have brought us to the brink of nuclear holocaust many times since 1946. And every U.S. administration since Lyndon B. Johnson has acknowledged that the Middle East is the most likely flashpoint for nuclear war. Third, today's rampant nuclear proliferation from Morocco to Pakistan, including the growing availability of natural uranium ore poses escalating dangers.

The other major focus of the conference was the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict; an examination of its current dynamics and discussion of an appropriate peace process based on mutual recognition and self-determination for both the Israeli and Palestinian people. The conference called for the American people and government to support a comprehensive solution to the conflict, including support for a "two-state solution" and mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO. There was also a strong call to address immediate human rights issues in the Middle East. At issue in the Middle East is not only the risk of nuclear war, but the ongoing loss of life and deep social, economic and political conflict.

The conference agenda then moved into

organizing and strategy sessions with presentations showing the diversity of activity concerning the Middle East: in Chicago, an AFSC-initiated Middle East deadly connections conference organized by Middle East, disarmament and freeze activists paved the way for the inclusion of a Middle East speaker at the Midwest Freeze Rally last October; in Boston, a coalition of Mideast and peace organizations is producing Middle East resources and slideshows; in Syracuse, a dialog group of Jews, Palestinians and others initiated by Presbyterian minister Gordon Webster is addressing the need for mutual recognition between Palestinians and Israelis; in Seattle, a strong working relationship has developed between New Jewish Agenda and the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) that is leading to joint activity.

Differences in politics and style were evident at the conference as people recounted their organizing experiences and sought to find mutual interests. But many were surprised by the level of respect and unity shown and by the genuine desire to work together in hopes of building a Middle East peace movement.

## The meaning of Zionism.

This spirit was most evident during a discussion of Zionism attended by more than 70 people. The session was arranged in response to one of the speakers, Nubar Hovsepian, a Lebanese scholar, emphasizing the importance of discussing Zionism, of bringing it out of the closet in order for Arabs and Jews to work together effectively. His view that it is necessary to understand the psychology of the other and to understand the meaning behind the term served as a challenge. Brief presentations by three women expressing Palestinian, Jewish and peace movement perspectives provided the opening for frank and fair exchange of ideas and feelings. People came away with a greater awareness not only of the powerful and emotional impact of the word, but also of its many definitions, which will be tremendously helpful in future organizing.

While the goal of the conference was not to reach agreement on a national campaign or to design a national coalition, some pros-

## Conference calls for support of a two-state Middle East solution.

pects did emerge for directions and tactics for organizing around Middle East issues. The conference was historic in putting deep political divisions aside to work on common objectives. The following four proposals received the most support.

AFSC and MfS representatives discussed the need for a Middle East Peace Alternative, a statement of principles and proposals for U.S. policy, which would enable activists to organize support for a comprehensive peace agreement, particularly when addressing members of Congress or other policy-makers. Their program for peace calls for a comprehensive settlement

holds still do not have a telephone. The present government does not show an interest in eliminating this deficiency. In the U.S., there are almost 180 million telephones. In the Soviet Union, there are barely 35 million. Many smaller companies don't even have a phone.

Without an efficient nationwide telecommunications system, we cannot ever make full use of computers, cannot even think about bringing the level of national productivity to that of the world.

## Social unity.

In your acceptance speech, you stated the party's objective was to achieve the highest



Participants in March 15 conference on American policy toward the Mideast

# Palestinians, Jews join forces for peace

of the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on mutual recognition of the right of national self-determination for both the Israeli and Palestinian people; the need for the U.S. government to deal with all parties to the conflict, including Israel, the PLO, Jordan, Syria, Egypt and Lebanon; a halt to the Middle East arms race by American initiation of negotiations and the establishment of a multilateral moratorium on arms transfers to the Middle East; the establishment of a nuclear free zone; and an end to military intervention in the region.

An MfS proposal to organize Middle East activities during the October Peace with Justice Week, which falls on the anniversary of the death of 240 U.S. Marines killed in the bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, received strong support. It is seen as an appropriate time to press for an end to U.S. intervention in the region and to give public visibility to Middle East issues. Plans for the week include memorial services for the Lebanese, Palestinians, Israelis and Americans who died in the Lebanon war, rallies outside military recruitment centers, visits to congressional offices, speakers and films.

An important organizing campaign, which many groups supported, was ADC's call to change the definition of "Arab" in the newest edition of Merriam-Webster's Thesaurus which reads "vagabond, tramp." AFSC, NJA and major Protestant denomi-

nations intend to demand that Merriam-Webster change this definition.

The spring visit of Dov Yermiya, an Israeli anti-war activist (retired army colonel) being co-sponsored by AFSC and NJA was also viewed by many as an excellent organizing opportunity. He is currently a leader of the Israeli Committee Against Racism, a group formed to respond to the growing support for Meir Kahane's racist beliefs and activity. Kahane's election to the Knesset has already opened the way for Israeli and American Jews to debate the general Israeli-Palestinian dynamic, and Yermiya's visit will foster that discussion.

The four-day conference provided new coalitions, new directions and revised strategies. It indicated that with the participation of Arabs, Jews, freeze, peace and religious activists, and with clearly articulated peace politics, the silence surrounding the Middle East can be broken. Through greater public information and debate, American policy can be changed in favor of one that does not rely on intervention, massive arms sales and military aggression, but on the recognition of domestic political, social and human needs of all the peoples of the Middle East.

**Joanne Ruby** is the Middle East Program Coordinator of the Chicago Office of the American Friends Service Committee; **Jackie Gelb** is on the national staff of Mobilization for Survival.

# Soviet

Continued from preceding page

with requirements of modern age. We are a throwback in this regard to years when heavy industry was the leading force of production. Unless we change rapidly, our system will fall hopelessly behind other industrial societies, especially those of the U.S. and Japan.

It is a sad comment that in 1985, just 15 years before the turn of the second millennium, the vast majority of Soviet house-

social productivity of labor in the world. This requires active and enthusiastic participation of all members of Soviet society, which can never be accomplished without the opportunity of all grieved parties to air their complaints and receive satisfaction. You cannot expect Soviet Jews to become enthusiastic supporters of this "new beginning" if the painful problem of separation of hundreds of thousands of families is not solved. Neither can our technical and cultural intelligentsia take an enthusiastic part in this "new beginning" unless free speech is guaranteed and thousands of political prisoners are released and rehabilitated. Nor will industrial workers actively support

your call unless they are made to feel important, and not just with words. Soviet working people must be allowed active participation in selecting their bosses and in real deliberation of economic and social plans.

Mikhail S. Gorbachyov, take these views into consideration. They represent the views of millions of Soviet people. You have a great opportunity to make the Soviet Union one of the best and most democratic societies in the world. This awareness creates a new and powerful hope among all Soviet people.

**Alex Amerisov** is a Soviet socialist exile. An interview with him appeared in *In These Times*, February 20.



# Another cry heard from the beloved country

The True Confessions of an  
Albino Terrorist

By Breyten Breytenbach  
Farrar Straus Giroux,  
396 pp., \$18.95

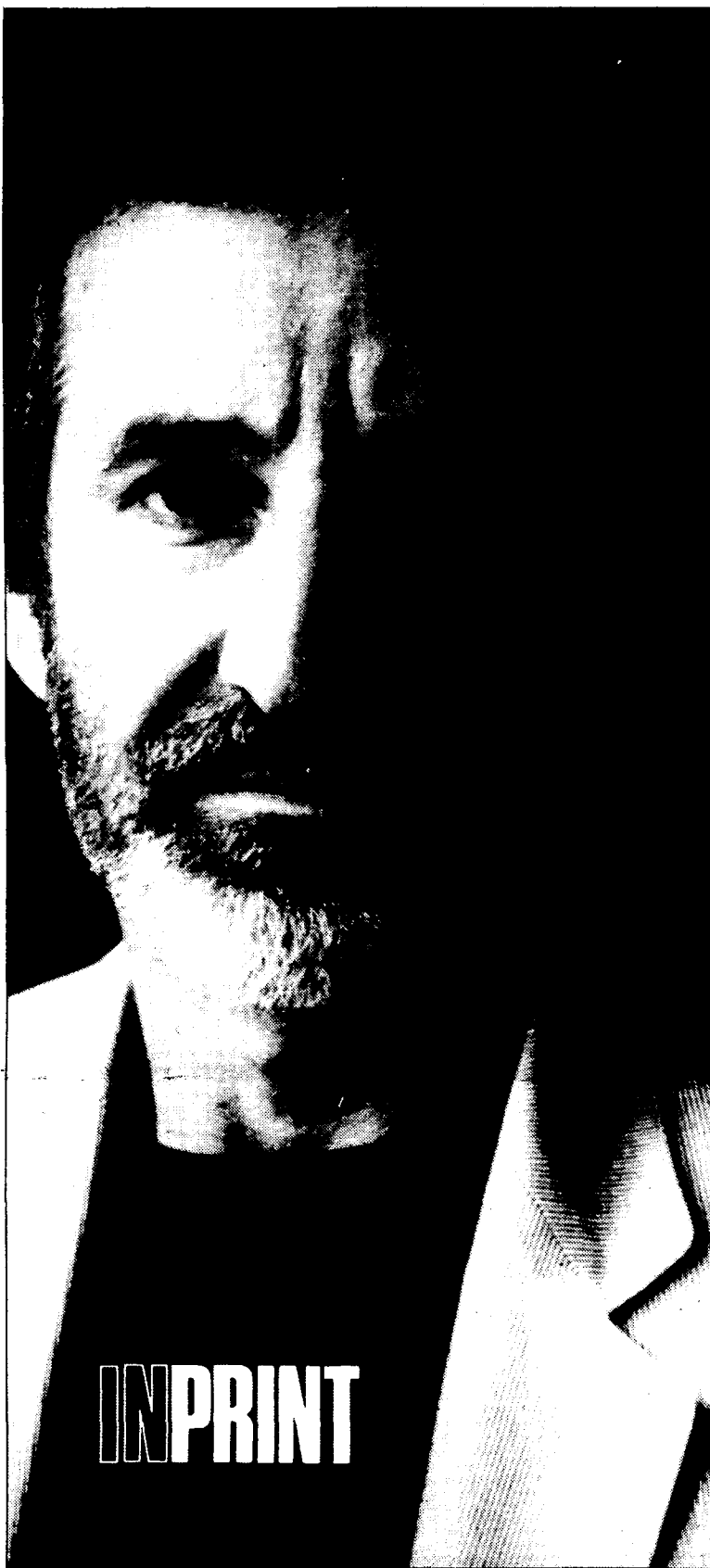
By Dan Bellm

IN AUGUST 1975 THE POET Breyten Breytenbach returned to South Africa from exile on a secret mission: In Paris he had helped form Okhela, a group that aimed to organize white resistance to apartheid. Although a political novice, he agreed to travel home, disguised and bearing a false passport, to recruit new members and help them flee the country. But South African security forces, tipped off by an informer, trailed Breytenbach throughout his three-week stay and nabbed him as he prepared to leave from the Johannesburg airport. After a much-touted "terrorism" trial Breytenbach was sentenced to nine years' imprisonment; he served seven, two of them in solitary confinement.

To the Afrikaner nationalists Breytenbach was a particularly grating opponent: a renegade from their own "tribe" and a member of a prominent family. Shortly before his arrest Breytenbach slipped into a grade-B movie house to elude the security men, only to find a newsreel on the South African reconnaissance forces, "the first of which was commanded by my eldest brother John Wayne himself. So I found myself in the utterly incongruous position," he recalls, "of hiding away in a dark cinema hall watching my brother and his men on the screen jumping from aeroplanes with their parachutes blossoming in the sky...blowing up gullies and skewering blackened dummies with the audience applauding patriotically."

Ironically, it was the poet in the family, not the commando, whom the state labeled violent. Among many trumped-up charges Breytenbach was later accused of conspiring to blow up the granite monument to the Afrikaans language in Cape Town, and in a figurative way he has done so with his newly published prison memoirs, mockingly titled *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist*. Writing in English, the foremost Afrikaans poet now declares, "I do not consider myself an Afrikaner."

Breytenbach's bond to his captors gives the book both a biting humor and a terrible sadness. He draws merciless caricature-portraits of prison warders, policemen and interrogators—human



Writer Breytenbach says, "Try not to go to prison; it's never worth it."

beings disfigured by their roles in an inhuman system. But he is equally unsparing of himself, and of the "million little compromises and humiliations" that survival has wrung from him. Government agents promised him a light sentence in return for retracting certain poems and for keeping political speeches out of his trial—then betrayed his trust. Another agent allowed some of Breytenbach's prison poems to be published—then insisted that the book be dedicated to him. Breytenbach says he wrote *Confessions* to "purge" himself, "and if I say, 'purge' it may imply that there are events—

that I myself have done things—which are improper, which I ought to be ashamed of. It is true: I am not a hero; I am not even a revolutionary.... But I tried also not to paint myself prettier than I am."

## Vomiting filth.

Breytenbach describes the composition of his book as "vomiting" into a tape recorder, and the story itself as a kind of "filth...that one has to get rid of if one wants to go on living." Unfortunately, much of his material has not been re-worked past the spilled-onto-tape stage, and as a result *Confessions* is poorly organized and fre-

quently disfigured by ranting.

The opening chapters throw us headlong into Breytenbach's arrest and trial long before we're given the political or biographical context necessary to understand these events; the needless confusion undercuts our sympathy with his plight. "It was my intention to produce a political text," he writes. "If it turned out to be more 'literary' than expected it can only be because I couldn't help it."

In fact, the book's bitter self-consciousness and indecision about its motives weaken it in both categories. The "literary" technique of sprinkling "inserts," footnotes and "recapitulations" throughout the book adds to the disorder by attempting to paper it over; too often *Confessions* reads like an unedited transcript.

Worse, Breytenbach is now likely to be looked to as a knowledgeable commentator on South African politics and the anti-apartheid movement as a whole. *The*

*Exiled Afrikaner Breytenbach's work is that of a poet, not a political thinker.*

*True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist*, however, is the work of a poet, not a political thinker, and its political pronouncements range generally from incoherent to irresponsible. "One of the effects of apartheid," Breytenbach admits, is that "it has splintered the opposition to the system." If so, then his off-hand diatribes against the African National Congress (ANC) will play nicely into the apartheid state's hands. Breytenbach calls the ANC "the greyest, the most ancient" political organization in South Africa, "one that has squandered its assets and was only lukewarm in the struggle when more thorough opposition might have swung things the other way." Then he backs off, as if begging a poet's license to blather: "But that is only a superficial criticism.... Even if I were that capable I should not pretend to be analyzing the ANC or its history here." Yet later he takes up the theme again, calling the ANC "totalitarian": "And I don't believe there's any chance of the ANC transforming itself into a free democratic organization. It is 'free' and 'democratic' now in the double-speak, Orwellian sense."

What political platform does Breytenbach himself offer? A reader of these *Confessions* will be hard-pressed to find one. Consider this: "The structure must be shattered by violence. And violence will be blind because its eyes will be useless from the despair of having seen too much...of never

IN THESE TIMES APRIL 3-9, 1985 13 having truly seen anything at all.... The land shall belong to no one." Or elsewhere: "Totalitarianism is on the increase.... The least all of us can do...is unite to expose all the intelligence services and the spy organs and the security or political police and the secret societies of the world. Pipe dream! So much for universality." It becomes difficult to listen to a man who keeps retreating from his own advice.

Toward the end of the book, in "A Note on South African Prisons," we actually find Breytenbach arguing for liberal prison "reform" within the apartheid system: "Training programs should be pushed much further and should involve outside experts.... Everything must be done to involve 'outside' agencies and concerns in the attempt to find a collective solution to the problems of 'crime.'...The prisoner needs to know that he is doing something useful, with initiative and responsibility...." But what problem of crime are we discussing here—skin color? From a man who knows what a prison in South Africa is, who claims to "know what it is like to be black in a white country," such chatter is not only baffling but painful.

Breytenbach is much better at drawing spiritual lessons from his prison experience than political strategies, and for that his *True Confessions* can command deep respect. "If you are a writer," he concludes, "watch out for words—they are traitors! Be pliant and weak when you have to. Cry if you must. Try not to go to prison; it's never worth it." And the 13 prison poems (translated from Afrikaans by Denis Hirson) that close the book are a fine introduction to Breytenbach's energetic and passionate verse. Above all, his message is a harrowing cry of pain from another of apartheid's victims: "People say, *how did you survive?* I say, *I did not survive.*"

Dan Bellm is a New York-based writer who writes for the *Village Voice*, the *Guardian*, the *New York Native*.

## NOTEBOOK

### Labor's Joke Book

Edited by Paul Buhle  
WD Press, P.O. Box 24115,  
St. Louis, MO 63130,  
64 pp., \$3.95

You could read this funny little book in 30 minutes, but you're likely to spend hours enjoying its scores of labor jokes, stories, poems and cartoons. Buhle provides an apt introduction to the well-chosen materials, which he rightly describes as representative of a thin but precious tradition. Highlights include a short sketch by the Wobbly humorist T-Bone Slim, several fine Art Young cartoons, a generous sampling of immigrant working-class gags, Laura Tane's marvelous black humorous poem "Boss" and a "gallery" of drawings by the late Fred Wright. The employer catches a fair share of abuse in this volume, but the most interesting and ubiquitous character remains the ever-loyal and ever-disappointed working person, variously incarnated as Ernest Riebe's thickheaded "Mr. Block," as Art Young's "Poor Fish" or as Ryan Walker's "Henry Dubb." While weak on Afro-American working-class humor, *Labor Joke Book* is otherwise a delight—funnier than a presidential press conference.

-D.R.





By Pat Aufderheide

WOODY ALLEN HAS BECOME our existentialist of the imaginary, our resident movie-house analyst of the silver screen's alternative reality. *The Purple Rose of Cairo* is his most controlled, least cheaply bitter exercise yet in a theme he's explored in print (the short story of "Kugel-mass Episode," in which a schlemiel enters the story of *Madame Bovary*) and on film (most recently, in *Zelig*, the tale of a man whose identity is as liquid as Warholian celebrity). The theme is the interpenetration of art and life, the way in which escapism is part of an otherwise unendurable reality for the "little people" of a world divided into audience and performers, the anonymous and the famous.

The entire movie takes place in a sanctuary, the nostalgic past of movie-version Depression life and Depression-era movies about fabulous luxury. Cecilia (Mia Farrow) lives a miserable existence, with an unemployed husband who beats her and a waitressing job she can't handle.

While dropping dishes, she dreams of movie heroes. She really lives at the movies, where the glamor and happy endings take her

away from meaningless grunge. On screen in her small town this week is *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, a Lubitsch film full of socialites and adventurers. Eventually a pith-helmeted character, Baxter (Jeff Daniels) notices her in the audience, and flees his fictional confines to explore the "reality" of love at first sight.

The character has a lot to learn about real life—about money, unemployment, sex-for-hire and other things. But nothing convinces him to return to work—where, on screen, the actors are stalled in the second reel—until his creator, the actor, arrives. Desperate to save his career from angry moguls and anxious studio lawyers, the actor romances Cecilia to get his character back on screen. In the end, Cecilia's been betrayed by everyone, and she's back in the movie house munching popcorn and watching movie characters drink champagne.

Farrow plays the character that Woody usually does—the hapless but charming nebbish. The anti-pathetic edge is off the persona this time, in part because a female character doesn't have to confront the conflicts that a male character must in playing a basically passive role. She can be pitiful without becoming a nerd.

Through his feminine alter ego,

Woody works out his own love-hate relationship with the American dream machine. The charming Cecilia is the stage for others' frustrations and expectations; her needs, quite literally, build characters. Everyone wants to be, not just somebody, but a star.

Baxter wars against the notion he's only a bit-part in the story, and flees off screen to what he thinks will be "happily ever after," in an abandoned New Jersey amusement park. The actor who plays him really loves Cecilia, if only for a moment, because she thinks he already is a star. The actor's quest for identity, of course, is as empty as the fictional character is airy.

In this movie, like in *Zelig*, Allen depends on an old comic technique: mixing categories of reality, slyly substituting symbol for substance and vice versa. You might think of this game, as anthropologist Gregory Bateson once put it, as eating the menu rather than the food in a restaurant. It's good for fast chat—"We'll live on love!" the movie character tells Cecilia; "That's movie talk," she reproves him gently—and good for sight gags, like Baxter's confusion at meeting prostitutes dressed in movie-star glitter.

But Allen is going past quick jokes here. He's built a movie around the premise that the substitution game has become part of daily life, a necessary part of creating identities in a world where real relationships always let you down. Cecilia never knew love, in the romantic form she knows it as, until it walked off the screen.

"Where I come from," Baxter tells her, "people don't disappoint." The very grimness of her Depression—her husband is unrelieved ugliness, from his limiment-greased back to his surly threats to slug her—has generated a secure world of reliable romance. Cecilia's happy to live with half-a-loaf—"He's only fictional, but you can't have everything," she says of her lover—until she meets the actor. And that's when we find that feeding egos dependent on stardom is what creates relationships you can't depend on. It's a vicious cycle that sends her back with new despair for the movies to lull.

The film is set in the Depression, but it's no simple period piece. It's as current as the latest Lucasfilm or Spielberg project, making state-of-the-art nostalgia out of pieces of past pop culture. This Depression does not document past reality but images of the Depression—Hopper paintings, Dashiell Hammett dialog, RKO and Warner movies. In Cecilia's real life, people talk in lines stolen from *Casablanca* and tough-guy movies. When they say, "This is real life, not the movies," it's a joke, or a lie.

And the film-within-a-film is no accurate recreation, but an arch commentary on the way '30s films have fed into pop culture since. There are *Raiders of the Lost Ark* elements butting up against poses that come off late-night TV. The crudely-drawn ironic frame around our movie-past makes it not another era, but a state of mind in this one, incorporating elements from a mythic, not historic, archive.

Cecilia is Woody Allen's fondest romantic image of himself as a victim of the movies—where you're only real if you're a star—and then, paradoxically, not real

Mia Farrow with Jeff Daniels (above) and with Danny Aiello in Woody Allen's film.

at all. Cecilia's loyalty to her idols is positively saintly—this is where it really pays off for Woody that his alter ego this time is a woman, who can play a victim or saint without raising an eyebrow in the audience. In the end, her loyalty makes her a martyr.

That's what gives *The Purple*

*Rose of Cairo*, in its last moments, the sour smell that *Stardust Memories* had all the way through. Allen loves his own martyrdom to the movies' false promises too much. His self-pity lashes out at the audience that, like Cecilia, did so want a happy ending.

©Pat Aufderheide

## MEDIA B E A T

### Hollywood Makes Amends, Quietly

One Academy Award this year was not televised: the posthumous award to screenwriters Carl Foreman and Michael Wilson, blacklisted screenwriters who wrote *The Bridge on the River Kwai*. In 1958, Pierre Boule picked up its Best Screenplay Oscar, because Foreman and Wilson were still considered too red for public scrutiny. In front of the House Un-American Affairs Committee, Wilson had taken the "full Fifth" (a stonewall) when asked about Communist Party activity in Hollywood, and Wilson had used the "diminished Fifth," merely averring that he was not then in the CP. Both writers—veteran left activists in the Hollywood community—went into exile overseas for a time, and Foreman's passport was annulled while he was cooling his heels in London. Wilson, while awaiting return to aboveground work, contributed to the feature project of blacklisted filmmakers, *Salt of the Earth*. By 1958, Foreman had already received a screen credit again, having cleared the blacklist with the help of mogul Harry Cohn. (Some say money changed hands for it to happen, though no hard evidence exists.) But the Academy was playing it cautious with the high-profile publicity. And, it seems, it still is. The Academy's discreetly private ceremony, attended by the men's widows, might have irked the writers who worked in the populist medium believing, as Wilson told Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund in the excellent *The Inquisition in Hollywood*, that writers "were accountable to the peoples of the world for the effects of their ideas." But it at least recognizes, if belatedly, a concern at the center of these men's political work. The center of the political storm of the time was the Screen Writers Guild, which had its origin in writers' fight to get correct credit for their scripts.

### On Radio: Where's the News?

When the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) dropped many of its regulations governing radio in 1981, many warned that news coverage would suffer. Some regulations had required a fixed amount of airtime devoted to public affairs. It was a hard charge to prove, since the requirement to file daily programming logs disappeared with deregulation. A 1982 study did show a 6 percent decline in public affairs programming, and many reported staff cutbacks in news departments. Now, complaints have grown to the point that the Radio-Television News Directors Association has commissioned another study to measure the drop-off. While radio station managers cut corners by cutting news, public opinion polls show a vigorous interest in news coverage. After the invasion of Grenada, many polls reported a general sentiment for a news ban in such military adventures. But a recent Gallup poll shows that 59 percent of respondents said that media should be allowed to cover future military operations without the kinds of restrictions imposed during the Grenada invasion.

### No Sale to the CIA?

Last fall, Icarus Films' Central American Film Library got a usual request—for a dozen films and videotapes, mostly about Nicaragua—from an unusual source: the CIA. Icarus president Jonathan Miller thought filmmakers should decide for themselves whether they wanted to sell to the CIA, and the result, according to New York media critic Debra Goldman, was a controversy over the ethics of selling leftist documentaries to stock the library of the same organization overseeing "covert action" in the area. Abbie Hoffman reportedly told filmmaker Emile DeAntonio to take the money and run to the bank; DeeDee Halleck, on the other hand, withheld her *Waiting for the Invasion* on principle, even though it had already aired on television. Some filmmakers thought the CIA request was not an educational mission but a reminder to Icarus that the CIA was watching the distributor. Others worried that their Central American subjects would be traced and followed. One producer who harbored no anxiety about making the sale was Managua-based videomaker Wolf Tirado. He said, "Here in Nicaragua [we have] mines in the port, bombs falling on our heads and kids getting killed every day—and the CIA is doing it. Why should we worry about them buying Betamax copies?" Besides, he said, "If the CIA wants to have our film, they probably got it four years ago."

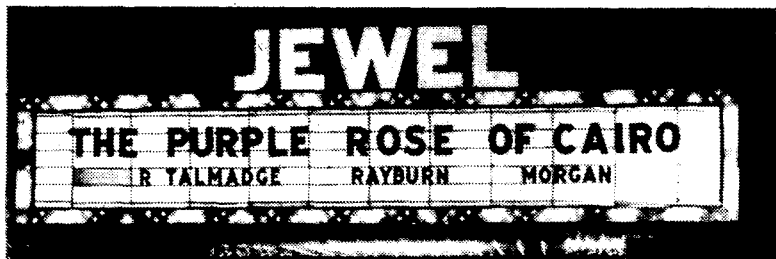
### Pop Culture First, Sez Ron

Last week, when Clarence Pendleton, Civil Rights Commission chair, took heat from black leaders after charging them with "new racism" for acclaiming affirmative action, he openly wondered if his frankness didn't inconvenience the White House. President Reagan later telephoned to reassure him, saying he had discovered Pendleton's concern by reading the newspaper, and had gotten to the front-page controversy a little late because he always reads "the comic pages first."

—Pat Aufderheide

## ART «» ENTERTAINMENT

### Alter egos inside living fantasies



Brian Hamill



Brian Hamill



Brian Hamill



# Bird

Continued from page 24

Washington Post, which ignored the passing of Parker and Coltrane, published a reminiscence of Thelonius Monk by jazz critic Peter Keepnews and recently covered a Monk retrospective concert at Howard University.

Yet who could argue with trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, who recently chided America's cultural arbiters for failing to recognize jazz as our nation's contribution to the world's music? Writing in the Long Island newspaper, *Newsday*, Marsalis explained that artists such as Parker: "changed the face of American music. They

introduced an entire range of moods and emotions into the vocabulary of Western music, an entirely new way of thinking in the language of music. They didn't look to Europeans for guidance.... Through most of America's history, there has been such a negative racial climate that the contributions of black Americans have been overlooked.... What I see as a younger musician is that the cultural contributions of black Americans will continue to be overlooked unless someone says, 'Wait a minute.'"

Three decades after Charlie Parker died on the inside pages, it will have to be "someone" other than America's major newspapers.

**David Kusnet** has worked as a newspaper reporter, union organizer and political speechwriter.

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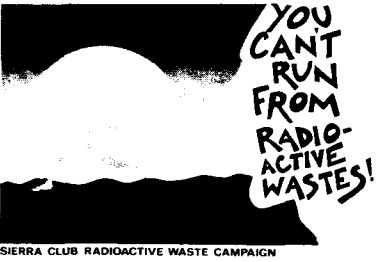
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These were among the headlines on the front pages of American newspapers 30 years ago. On March 15, 1955, unusually deep in their inside pages, the newspapers also reported that, three days before, Charlie ("Yardbird") Parker, the alto saxophonist who revolutionized modern jazz, had died at 34 of stomach ulcers, pneumonia, cirrhosis of the liver and a possible heart attack. He died while visiting a wealthy friend, the Baroness de Koenigswarter, who later emphasized, "We had a wonderful friendship going, nothing romantic." She waited before notifying the press of Parker's death in order to inform his wife and family so they wouldn't have to get the news from the radio or the papers.

In the America of the '50s, when the nation's music was far more susceptible to change than its politics or economics, Charlie Parker was a dangerous revolutionary. Together with older jazz innovators, such as trumpeter John Birks ("Dizzy") Gillespie and pianist Thelonius Monk, Parker led the "bebop" revolution that transformed modern jazz.

"Bird" was an appropriate nickname for Parker. As his promoter Robert Reisner wrote, Parker's fingers "flew over the alto sax.... His music soared, swooped and glided." Playing at a frenetic pace, Parker's jagged, intricate, rhythmic and harmonic improvisations were not quite like anything jazz audiences had ever heard before. And they helped create a complex, sophisticated and cerebral music that marked a major advance in our nation's only indigenous art form—jazz.

Spanning the period from World War II, the tense Truman years, and the torpid Eisenhower era, the bebop revolution implicitly challenged the conformity and false calm of post-war America. As jazz critic and radio host Geoffrey Jacques wrote, "Bebop was developed by young, primarily black musicians as an antidote to the diluted jazz—the prearranged dance music being played by the swing bands of the '30s—which had overtaken the music's authentic forms.... The young bebop musicians were experimenting with techniques that allowed individual instrumentalists more freedom to improvise; they were also seeking to develop new harmonic and melodic formulas that they hoped could not be imitated by white musicians."

#### "Deaths elsewhere."

But, if the beboppers were black musicians who demanded respect as artists and not only entertainers, the mass media refused to accept them on these terms. Charlie Parker in death—like his colleagues in life—was ridiculed, marginalized or ignored by most of the media and treated respectfully only by maverick journalists.

America's newspaper of record, the *New York Times*, reported Parker's death in an eight-paragraph article on page 17, which concentrated on the circumstances of his death rather than his musical innovations. For the *Times*' racier journalistic cousins, the circumstances of Parker's death were all that was worth mentioning.

The Hearst-owned tabloid, the *New York Daily Mirror*, headlined the story: "Bop King Dies in Heiress' Flat." Similar stories appeared in other newspapers. The *Chicago Tribune* ran a two-paragraph story under the headline "Bird Parker Dies in Suite of Baroness." In the *Chicago Sun-Times*, Parker's death got three lines on the obituary page under "Deaths Elsewhere." Other newspapers, including the *Washington Post*, also reported on Parker's death.



## Thirty years after his death, few know that Charlie "Bird" Parker led a revolution that changed the face of modern music.

Outside of the black press, few newspapers treated Parker's death as the passing of a musical giant. One of the few was the *New York Post*, now the crown jewel of Rupert Murdoch's U.S. newspaper empire but then owned by Dorothy Schiff and edited by the crusading liberal James Wechsler. The *Post* weighed in on March 15 with a 20-paragraph story, beginning on page three and spilling over to an inside page, which quoted grieving musicians and fans, described Parker's musical innovations and downplayed the sensational aspects of his death.

A week later, following the funeral, *Down Beat*, a jazz magazine devoted an entire issue to the musician's career, declaring:

"Parker was a great man only to the informed. Only the musicians who stole from him could understand the treasure he carried to the rest of the world. And so Charlie Parker came to the end of his life, as the good ones do in all centuries, pressing against the limits of his art."

#### Cult hero.

In the years following his death, Parker became a cult hero to hipsters white and black, admired as much for his personification of the artist-as-victim as for his actual accomplishments. "Bird lives" was scrawled on many a building and subway car. Yet 30 years later, he is remembered mainly by jazz buffs and modern jazz

never regained the popularity it enjoyed during the late '40s and early '50s.

To be sure, there is a greater sophistication in the mainstream media's coverage of jazz—America's classical music—than there was three decades ago. There has been front-page coverage of the passing of Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington and Count Basie, musical geniuses whose celebrity predated the bebop revolution and whose public persons more closely approximated the traditional image of jazzman-as-entertainer. While the jazz moderns continue to die on the inside pages, John Coltrane and Thelonius Monk, each a more powerful contributor to the music's evolution than Parker, are remembered more fully.